

JUDAISM

THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT— A HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION

W. Gunther Plaut

Ambassador College

A JEWISH APPROACH TO HOMOSEXUALITY

Hershel J. Matt

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JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication between Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.

The First Reader

An Appreciation of Will Herberg

The death of Will Herberg in the spring of 1977 meant the passing of one of the most remarkable thinkers produced by American Jewry. Herberg, who served as Managing Editor of JUDAISM during the first few years of its history, was both a sociologist and a theologian of importance. He proposed a sociology of American religion which has remained influential to the present and he wrestled with fundamental issues in Jewish theology from a unique vantage point.

In his paper, "Will Herberg: Intuitive Spokesman for American Judaism," *S. Daniel Breslawer* suggests that Herberg's fundamental ideas are accurate reflections of the views held, consciously or unconsciously, by the majority of American Jews as they struggle to achieve the goal that the Editor of this journal has called "acculturation without assimilation, integration without absorption."

A Jewish View on Homosexuality

One of the major subjects of controversy in the area of contemporary sexual morality is homosexuality. The place of the homosexual in society at large and his position in Judaism have both been treated with far more heat than light, with partisans on both sides rushing to man the barricades.

In "Sin, Crime, Sickness or Alternative Life Style?: A Jewish Approach to Homosexuality," *Hershel J. Matt* treats the subject out of a deep commitment to the authority of the Torah and with an equally genuine sympathy for his fellow human beings, a quality which he rightly regards as a supreme imperative of the Jewish tradition. The approach which he proposes for dealing with this complex issue may well serve to advance a consensus as well as action in the community.

A Theology For Our Day

The past few years, marked by the rise of intensified racial and ethnic consciousness, have had a direct effect upon contemporary Christian theology. There have emerged various patterns of "liberation theology" dedicated to the situation of the black minority or the Puerto Rican group in America. In most cases, the Biblical basis for liberation theology has been found in the Hebrew Scriptures, which lay stress upon God as the Redeemer of the oppressed.

In his paper, "A Theology of Jewish Liberation," *Levi A. Olan* suggests that there is need for a comparable theology dealing with the

destiny of the Jewish people itself. Today, Jewish survival, he believes, is threatened as never before. The widespread doubts in many quarters regarding the preservation of the identity both of the Jewish people and of Judaism must be faced and countered. There is need for a new birth of faith in God the Redeemer, Who is the final Guarantor of the indestructibility of Israel.

Nor is this faith narrow in compass. The Messianic vision, as Judaism has always conceived of it, is dual in character, encompassing the redemption both of Israel and of the world.

Jews Are Liberals

It has long been axiomatic that American Jews have a strong proclivity for liberalism, particularly in the areas of social justice and civil liberties. To be sure, the truth of this assumption has been challenged in recent years, and it may be that the link is no longer as intense and unbreakable as once seemed to be the case. For a conspectus of views on this question, our readers may be referred to the symposium on "Judaism and Liberalism—Marriage, Separation or Divorce," published in JUDAISM in the Winter 1972 issue.

Nonetheless, even recent studies have demonstrated that most American Jews are still moved by concerns for freedom and justice to a greater degree than seems to be the case with their fellow Americans.

That this is not merely a co-efficient of the immigrant and American experience out of which the American-Jewish community has grown is suggested in a comparative study by *Rita J. Simon* entitled "Jews and Civil Liberties: American and Israeli Jewish Attitudes." She points out that in spite of the constant pressures and unrelenting perils to which Israeli Jewry is exposed, a lively concern for civil liberties still persists among them. Is this a modern illustration of the Talmudic statement, "If Jews are not prophets, they are at least the children of prophets"?

A Midrash For Our Time

The German historian, Ludwig von Ranke, called Jews "the most historical of peoples." One has only to observe Jewish life at any time, including our own, to see how large history and its lessons, whether real or alleged, bulk in the consciousness of living Jews.

No event in all of Jewish history has played as significant a role as the Exodus from Egypt. In his paper, "The Israelites in Pharaoh's Egypt—A Historical Reconstruction," *W. Gunther Plaut* explores in depth some of the implications of the Egyptian bondage of our ancestors. Finding striking parallels with our own age, he has written a modern Midrash on bondage and liberation, modern not only in point of time, but in spirit and approach.

A Harmonization of Opposites

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the political philosophy to be found in Jewish tradition. Undoubtedly the emergence of the State of Israel has stimulated this tendency. In his paper, "Democratic Elitism: The Ideological Framework of Jewish Community," *Mordecai Roshwald* suggests that the two contrary philosophies of aristocracy and democracy are reconciled and united in the Jewish concept of the "people of God," basically equal yet striving for excellence. This concept, he suggests, has continued to survive in secular form in the Jewish consciousness to the present day, both in Israel and in the Diaspora.

The Appeal of Religious Humanism

One of the seminal, if neglected, figures who ushered in the modern age was the eighteenth century Italian thinker, Giambattista Vico. *José Faur* explores his high evaluation of the Hebraic tradition and his opposition to the secular scientism which was making itself felt in his own day. In "Vico, Religious Humanism and the Sephardic Tradition," Faur describes his subject and then traces the impact of some of Vico's ideas on Sephardic thinkers during the past two centuries.

Help Save Jewish Scholarship

The growth of Jewish Studies programs in scores of American colleges and universities has been rightly greeted as one of the most hopeful signs for the vitality of Jewish life and culture in America. Like any other achievement, however, it raises a host of problems.

In his paper, "The Needs of Jewish Scholarship in America," *Norman Roth* offers a critical analysis of the present situation and suggests some basic priorities. It should not be necessary to indicate that the opinions expressed by the author are his own. The issues he raises undoubtedly deserve consideration.

Germany Transplanted to New York

Literature on modern German Jewry, both during the Weimar epoch and under Nazism, is extensive and continues to grow. Virtually every aspect of the German-Jewish experience has been explored. On the other hand, very little attention has been paid to the life of German-Jewish refugees who succeeded in escaping the prison camps and the crematoria and found new homes in other lands, notably the United States.

In his paper, " 'The Fourth Reich'—German-Jewish Religious Life in America Today," *Michael N. Dobkowski* offers a survey of the religious institutions created in this country and an analysis of the destiny of these institutions during the past three decades and more.

Presenting Amos Oz to American Readers

In the nineteenth century, the Maskilim in Eastern Europe, who were dedicated to secularizing Jewish life and bringing Jews into the mainstream of modern culture, adopted as a slogan “*heyeh yehudi be’oholekha ve’adam bezetekha*,” “Be a Jew in your tent and a human being outside.” Relating Judaism and humanism has continued to be a basic problem of the modern Jew everywhere in the world. In Israel, where Jewish life is both natural and all-pervasive, the contradiction between the Jew and the human being has, perhaps, been most effectively resolved.

The Israeli novelist, Amos Oz, portrays the life of his contemporaries in the Jewish State and reveals their problems as essentially human and, as is to be expected, reflecting a special Israeli ambience. His major works are analyzed in *Ivan Sanders’* paper, “Simple Elements and Violent Combinations: Reflections on the Fiction of Amos Oz,” which, incidentally, will serve to introduce Oz’s work to non-Hebrew readers.

Breira: An Analysis

The fires of controversy that raged a few months ago around Breira seem to have subsided, in part because more pressing issues confronting the State of Israel have obtruded themselves in the intervening period. Nonetheless, both historical truth and the spiritual health of the American-Jewish community require that the phenomenon called Breira be fairly and justly evaluated, a goal almost completely lost sight of in the heat of argument. A significant contribution to a balanced view is presented by *Jacques Kornberg* in his paper, “Zionism and Ideology: The Breira Controversy,” which speaks for itself.

The Editor would add one basic observation. Breira has been strongly attacked by its opponents on moral grounds. The organization has been charged with bad faith and a secret hostility to the State of Israel. To be sure, these charges are not difficult to rebut. Nonetheless, strong reservations with regard to Breira remain. These affect not its alleged integrity, but its lack of realism in approaching the situation. In a perilous time, one may legitimately challenge the bad timing of some of its public pronouncements. Even more fundamental is its failure to reckon with the fact that no “moderate” or “dovish” Arab group, let alone Arab leadership, has yet appeared. Nonetheless, Breira has continued to talk and act as though there were an “opposite number” in the Arab camp. This attitude raises serious questions with regard to its perception of the present and future of the State of Israel and its prescription for the problems of the Middle East as a whole.

R. G.

Will Herberg: Intuitive Spokesman for American Judaism

S. DANIEL BRESLAUER

WILL HERBERG WAS A CURIOSITY IN THE American Jewish community and his passing raises once again the questions posed by his life and writings. In a way not uncharacteristic of many intellectuals of his generation, Herberg began his career committed to secular Marxism. He was completely devoted to a militant radicalism until, again like many of his contemporaries, he became disenchanted with Marxism. Unlike most of his contemporaries, however, he turned from secularism to theology. He struggled to bring his modern sensitivities and traditional Judaism into comparative harmony, to develop the relationship between "Judaism" and "modern man." In these efforts Herberg found the guidance of Christian theologians an often instructive one, and his writings seem more at home within twentieth century Christian thought than as part of Jewish theology. Ironically, it may be just because of his sensitivity to Christianity and Herberg's own personal struggle with Judaism that his writings are such useful indicators of American Jewish life. His view of Judaism is not the traditional one; it is far from any conventional exposition of Jewish religion. Yet, even when he condemns popular religiousness he is expressing it. If we look closely at his writings we will see that he articulates the three basic presuppositions of popular American Jewish religion: a qualified affirmation of the American Way of Life, the existential particularity of Jews, and a concern for mankind in its totality.

As an analyst of the American society, Herberg pointed out that, amid interreligious conflict, American life offered a unified conception of what it meant to be religious, a "faith common to Americans as Americans, and (which) is genuinely operative in their lives."¹ In his classic study, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, he performed a major synthesis of the survey data on American religiousness. While much of that data had been previously available, Herberg's conclusion that the three religious traditions in America were becoming less and less Biblical as they increasingly adapted to the American Way of Life represented a major theoretical contribu-

1. Will Herberg, "America's Civil Religion: What it is and Whence it Comes," in *American Civil Religion*, edited by Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 77.

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ution. As a sociologist, he traced the social forces which molded three various communities into similar shapes.

As a theologian, Herberg's contribution was the critical voice which issued from his book, and he saw the American Way of Life as an inauthentic substitute for Biblical faith. Recognizing the social roots of the American Way of Life, its civil values, and its positive features, he concluded, nevertheless, that it was idolatrous:

I would regard the American Way of Life, which is the social face of America's Civic Religion, as probably the best way of life yet devised for mass society—with the proviso that even the best way of life, if it is the way of life of a mass society, will have its grave defects.²

Herberg's theology is often nothing else than the spelling out of those defects. It is a sign as much of his closeness to Jewish thought as to his influence on it that these reflections on the defects of the American Way of Life are now part of the Conservative movement's High Holy Day Mahzor. Symbolically, the Jewish community as a whole has accepted his premise that American civil religion may be idolatrous. The nation and its goals, the culture and its expectations, the economy and its needs, can be magnified in importance until morality, God, and personal responsibility are overshadowed. "Civic religion," Herberg warned America, "has always meant the sanctification of the society and culture of which it is the reflection."³ Such a sanctification of human life is idolatry; it raises the partial, halting attempts of human beings to the status of divine and unalterable achievements. A Jewish perspective can only be opposed to such idolatry; Jewish religion recognizes the limitations of all human actions:

Religion informed with the Hebraic spirit, therefore, exhibits a double and basically ambivalent attitude to society. It affirms and even serves society so long as the latter is aware of its own limitations and is content to serve the purposes for which it was meant in the order of creation. But it is compelled to challenge society the moment the latter forgets its place in the scheme of things and pretends to be the whole of life beyond challenge or criticism.⁴

Certainly there were many in the Jewish community who needed to hear Herberg's message. The easy equation of democracy and truth, social stability and religious fulfillment, tempted many Americans. But, on the whole, Jews were prepared to accept, affirm, and recognize in his analysis ideas that they had already made their own. Jews were sensitized through the Holocaust to the dangers of nationalism. By the middle 1950s

2. *Ibid.*, p. 86

3. Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1960), p. 263.

4. Will Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man: An Interpretation of Jewish Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 143.

the struggle against anti-Semitism, radicalism, and Nazism had already led Jews to a more critical attitude towards American life. They had internalized an ethical value system that impelled them towards social action—in theory, if not always in practice. More pragmatically, Jews were committed to “acculturation without assimilation,” which demanded a certain distancing of themselves from the general culture. A strong ethical and moral critique of American life provided just such a creative and legitimate position from which to maintain distance while remaining part of society. Herberg’s genius lay in sensing this need to criticize as well as to affirm Americanism and in expressing the ambivalence, not merely of Judaism, but of many American Jews, as well, towards the American Way of Life.

The Existential Particularity of Jews

Time and again, his critics have pointed out how much Herberg owes to Christian theologians. His existentialism, his defense of democracy, his approach to modern idolatry, his social theology are all stamped with the unmistakable mark of both Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr. True, Herberg’s writings cannot be understood without acknowledging this influence of Christianity, but it is misguided to see his theology only in this light. He writes out of a profound sensitivity to the existential particularity of Jews. Jews are different, have a traditional way of their own, and theology has as one of its uses the articulation of Jewish uniqueness. Herberg reflects the American Jewish concern with ethics, with persons, with compassion. He fills his theology with references to the great Jewish moralists from Talmudic times through Israel Salanter and the Musar (ethical) movement.⁵ The influence of Christian theology is evident when Herberg calls for “an ethic of perfection” and one is reminded of the Christian exaltation of “an impossible ethics.” But when he continues his study with a call for *kavvanah* and remarks that “The capacity for self-control, the ability to master one’s sinful impulses and deal with them constructively, is itself a crucial moral power,” the presence of Jewish tradition shines through.⁶ Herberg captures the moral optimism which motivated the Jewish community even when he accepts the darker side of humanity which Christian theology taught him.⁷

As he was aware of the need for Jews to remain aloof from the pessimism of Christian ethics, Herberg was also aware of the importance of specifically Jewish rituals. “A believing Jew,” he maintains, “will feel that his Christian neighbor ought to pray, attend church, and give his children a religious training, but no Jew, not even the most orthodox, will feel that a Christian ought to observe *kashrut* or light the Sabbath can-

5. Ibid, pp. 98ff.

6. Ibid., pp. 101–102.

7. Ibid., pp. 158–165.

dles.”⁸ Herberg intuitively that the importance of these rituals is limited to Jews. They are an acting-out of a specifically Jewish history and theology. Christian Biblical scholars pointed out that ritual in the Bible represents a dramatic enactment of “holy history.” Herberg goes beyond them and points out that contemporary Jewish ritual is also such a reliving of a communal past. While Passover and Easter have similar Biblical roots, Herberg finds that the Rabbinic tradition is more faithful to the Jewish spirit.⁹ Even Reconstructionism, a religious approach far from congenial to Herberg’s existentialist approach, receives his commendation since it points to the “undeniable socio-cultural role of religious observances” and reveals “the interplay of historical continuity and change in the tradition.”¹⁰

Herberg’s intuition of the cultural and ethical particularity of modern Jewish existence leads him to distinguish between the general religious question—what does it mean to be a self—and the more parochially Jewish question—what does it mean to live authentically under the Covenant.¹¹ The first question can be answered by recourse to Christian theologians; Jews can use the writings of a Tillich or Niebuhr as they struggle to find the meaning of selfhood. The second question needs to be answered in terms of God’s peculiar covenant with the Jews. “Israel is not a nation like other nations,” he admits “. . . Israel is a people brought into being by God to serve Him.”¹² Herberg has contributed to American Jewry a powerful statement of Jewish uniqueness. The concept of a “covenant-people” is not unique to Herberg but his use of it is particularly suggestive. The concept becomes for him a means by which the existential particularity felt by the American Jew can be articulated without destroying the universal elements within Judaism.

The Universal Relevance of Hebraic Thought

Herberg is, perhaps, most characteristic of American Jews when he expresses the universality of the Hebraic message. In its Biblical roots, he claims, Judaism has a universal social relevance. “The redemptive history of Israel,” he remarks, “is history for the world because it is through that history that the world is to be redeemed.”¹³ If American Jews are optimistic about the future of the world, about the moral state of the universe, that is because, as Herberg suggests, the dynamic of Hebraic religion “is certainly a dynamic of social progress.”¹⁴ He does not deny the negative

8. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 288ff.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 297.

11. Will Herberg, “Judaism as Personal Decision,” *Tradition and Contemporary Experience*, edited by Alfred Jospe (New York: Schocken, 1970) p. 79ff.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

13. Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man*, p. 271.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

features of modernity, but he traces them to non-Judaic roots. If modern society is to progress, it will be because of its Jewish heritage. "Hebraic religion," he writes, reflecting the dichotomy between Greek and Biblical thought that is prevalent in many Christian authors, "comes closer to what is best in modern thought than does the idealism of the Greek tradition."¹⁵

In his reading of the Hebrew Bible Herberg confirms the intuition of many of his Jewish contemporaries: American democracy is a manifestation of the Judaic spirit. When he opposes those who find Hebrew Scriptures "offensive to democratic decency," he relies more upon theological intuition than upon Germanic Biblical scholarship.¹⁶ Comparing Herberg's view of the "the kingship of God" with that expressed by Martin Buber we can note his approach. Whereas Buber indulges in extensive philological and sociological research, Herberg seeks to evoke a glimpse of the Biblical mentality. Buber focuses on the use of the words, the literary creations of the Judges and Prophets, the social institutions of the Biblical world. Herberg merely touches upon these issues to emphasize his theological plinth: "Life cannot be departmentalized into secular and sacred, material and spiritual."¹⁷ The psychological concern can be related to Herberg's desire to find the contemporary relevance of the Bible. Institutions cannot be transplanted from one culture to another; an attitude may be. It is this attitude toward life and history which Herberg finds essential to Biblical faith—both in the past and today.

Herberg joins American Jews in emphasizing the modern relevance of revelation. The word of God from Sinai or to the Prophets is a directive to thought, to a way of viewing the world—a view which both moderns and ancients can share. "We of today," he announces, "see what the prophets saw and proclaimed, that it is history itself which requires redemption."¹⁸ Revelation—whether of the Torah or to the Prophets—is "a new center and a new perspective in terms of which whatever knowledge we have may be related to the ultimate truth about existence."¹⁹ This approach is congenial to popular Jewish religion because, while it avoids making revelation depend upon a factual content, it does not dilute its ethical import. American Jewish thought, which Herberg expresses here, considers the Bible the key to modern man's predicament. At the same time, it does not conceive of the Bible as a detailed social blueprint. Most American Jews would agree with him that philosophers and social engineers seeking a new means of "coping with the perils and compulsions of modern social existence" are looking in the wrong direction, since "it is the biblical faith to which Judaism stands witness" that is the appropriate solution.²⁰ Herberg expresses a basic concern of American Jews—that

15. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 64ff.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 310.

Judaism be morally relevant but also intellectually sound. His own theoretical approach was, as mentioned earlier, profoundly influenced by Christian thought; yet his desire to blend modern relevance, moral energy, and intellectual integrity in an exegesis of the Hebrew Bible accurately reflects the needs of the American Jew.

Herberg and Professional Jewish Concerns

In a 1973 interview Herberg recalled his early career. "In those days," he said, "they worried a great deal about the survival of Judaism. They're worried about it now—everybody is always worrying."²¹ In contrast to this worry, Herberg advised reliance upon Divine Providence. Yet if he does not worry about survival, why then should a theologian write? Herberg's own contribution can be a reply: the theologian can be the articulate voice of the Jewish community, expressing its ambivalence to a society both affirmed and suspected, offering support for its experience of particularity, and interpreting its Scripture as a universal ethical message. Herberg was not a Jewish professional. In many ways he was marginal to the organizational structure of American Jewish life. He did not share the concerns for educational policy and curriculum, institutional leadership and social manipulation that professions often demonstrate. His role was more subdued—that of formalizing the diffuse agenda which American Jews had set for themselves. Most contemporary theologians think in different categories from his; there are no disciples who call themselves by his name. Nevertheless, he remains a reminder of the power and effectiveness of theology. It is fitting to recall with his passing that his words were profound echoes of the best ideals of many American Jews.

21. Will Herberg, in *U.S. News and World Report* (June 4, 1973): 60.

Sin, Crime, Sickness or Alternative Life Style?: A Jewish Approach to Homosexuality

HERSHEL J. MATT

I

HOMOSEXUALITY, WHICH IN THE GENERAL community has for some time been a major issue, has begun to be a matter of concern and controversy in the Jewish community as well. This development has come about for several reasons: partly because Jewish homosexuals are, like non-Jews, increasingly “coming out;” partly because some of them are seeking—even demanding—to be accepted as full-fledged members of the Jewish community and of the synagogue; and partly because Jews and non-Jews alike, both heterosexual and homosexual, are turning to rabbis and scholars for a clarification of what Judaism has to say on the subject.

II

That Judaism must have something to say should be obvious, for the Torah-text-and-tradition, claiming—as it does—to contain the revelation of God’s word and will for human life, claims to have something significant—indeed, crucial—to say about every important area of life, surely about such a basic dimension of life as sex. (“He who says Torah is one thing and the affairs of the world are something entirely other is as if he denies God.”)¹

What Judaism has to say about homosexuality would appear to be equally obvious, for all of the relatively few passages in the Torah-text that clearly refer to homosexuality² do so in negative terms. The words of the men of Sodom (Genesis 19), who surround Lot’s house and say “Where are the men who came to you tonight? bring them out to us, that we may know (or, “be intimate with”) them, almost certainly have a homosexual reference. (The usage of the word “sodomy” is, thus, well-founded.) And

1. *Midrash Pinhas* (Warsaw: 1876) Ch. IV, Sec. 34, p. 32.

2. Some Biblical passages that are commonly taken to refer to homosexuality are actually in dispute among scholars. The so-called male prostitute (*kadesh*), for example, may possibly not be a homosexual but a pimp, or a male who engages in heterosexual prostitution. The love between David and Jonathan (“your love was for me more wonderful than the love of women,” [2 Sam. 1:26]) may possibly refer to normal love between friends of either sex.

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the horrible story of the “concubine in Gibeah” (Judges 19), probably related to the Genesis passage, similarly involves the threat of homosexual attack. It is sometimes argued that the horror and condemnation expressed in these two stories are directed not against homosexuality as such, but against homosexual rape or against the violation of the sacred obligation of hospitality; it is also argued that the moral abhorrence expressed in the narrative passages does not, in itself, constitute legal prohibition. The two brief passages in the law code of Leviticus (19:22 and 20:13), however, are clear and categorical: “With a male you shall not lie as with a woman; it is an abomination . . . if a male lies with a male as one lies with a woman, the two of them have done an abhorrent thing; they shall be put to death.”

References in Talmudic and post-Talmudic sources—likewise relatively few—remain consistent with the Biblical prohibition. Whatever the question at issue—whether two men may share the same blanket, or even be together in private; whether two women may sleep in the same room; whether climatic conditions stimulate homosexual temptation; whether Jews are likely to be influenced by the homosexual behavior of non-Jews; whether the age of the homosexual offender should be a factor in determining culpability; what the appropriate punishment is, in theory and in practice; whether the punishment should be the same for male and female offenders; whether rumors concerning a fellow Jew’s homosexuality should be given credence; which privileges, communal and synagogal, should be denied to a homosexual—every single decision, pro or con, takes for granted that a homosexual act is a moral perversion, an outrageous and disgusting deed, a serious violation of the Torah’s command and, therefore, a grave sin. It would, thus, appear absolutely clear that a Jewish approach to homosexuality must end where and as it starts: with utter condemnation and categorical prohibition.

III

Yet, such a conclusion, at this point in our discussion, is premature. For if what we seek is a *truly Jewish* approach to a *contemporary* problem, we must not only consult Biblical sources and subsequent halakhic decisions, but must do two other things as well: a) determine, as far as we are able, the rationale and presuppositions of the traditional stand; and b) inquire whether there are now any changed circumstances or new data in the light of which the Torah’s stand today—though based on the same divine and enduring concerns and purposes—might possibly involve changed formulations or different emphases.

IV

Why does the Torah condemn homosexuality so utterly and consider it to be such an abomination? The reason cannot be simply the abhorrence

of the unknown, for a law does not forbid the unknown. Besides, the Torah specifically alludes to, and obviously was familiar with, the practice of homosexuality (along with other sexual offenses, often practiced as part of idolatrous cult worship), by both the Egyptians “in whose midst you dwelt” and the Canaanites “into whose land I am bringing you” (Lev. 18:3). Nor can the reason be merely “psychological” and “esthetic”—that homosexuality is inherently disgusting—for that would be begging the question: why was it considered disgusting? Nor can the reason be “statistical”—that the majority of men and women did not and do not practice homosexuality—for Torah-law must surely be based on more than statistics and averages; indeed, the Torah specifically warns *against* following the majority, when the majority is bent on evil.

The reasons for the Torah’s condemnation must be related rather to the will of the Creator for the human male and female whom He created: “God created man in His image . . . male and female He created them (Gen. 1:27) . . . God saw all that He had made and behold it was very good (Ibid. 31) . . . it is not good that man should be alone; I will make a helper for him [as complement and counterpoint to him, his opposite number] (Ibid. 2:18) . . . this one shall be called woman (Ibid. 2:23) . . . let a man leave his father and his mother, and cling to his wife [his woman], and they shall become one flesh (Ibid. 2:24) . . . be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Ibid. 1:28) . . . the Lord created the earth to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18) . . . I will establish My covenant between Me and you [Abraham] and your seed after you, throughout their generations . . . as an everlasting covenant” (Genesis 17:7).’

In the light of such Scriptural passages, some of the reasons for the Torah’s prohibition of homosexuality become discernible. One reason must be that in the Order of Creation the sexual “nature” and “structure” of the human male and female—including what we refer to as their anatomy, physiology, and psyche—call for mutual complementation, completion, and fulfillment through a heterosexual relationship. Another implied reason is that only through such a relationship, using the organs of generation in a manner conducive to generation, can a new generation appear to populate the earth. A third reason: only with the appearance of a second and third generation can there be a family in the full sense of the word: one that calls for and allows for caring love and reverent responsibility, not only between spouses but also among parents and children and grandchildren. This points to a fourth reason: homosexuality precludes history, not only individual and family history, but history as such—the stage on which both the divine and human roles in the providential drama are to be acted out. In the case of Jewish homosexuality, one further denial is involved: that of the continued survival of the Covenant People Israel, vehicle of God’s involvement in the world, “God’s stake in history.”

It is out of such concerns as these, we must assume, that the Torah-text-and-tradition prohibits homosexuality.

V

But whenever we speak of the Torah's prohibitions we must be mindful of one of the Torah's key presuppositions: the freedom and capacity of the individual human being to obey. Surely the very creation-in-the-image, which is the basic Biblical teaching about human beings, male and female, implies such freedom. How else could the Lord God hold Adam and Eve responsible for the first violation of the first prohibition? And when, in the very next generation, Cain is distressed at God's acceptance of Abel's offering and the rejection of his own, God tells him: "Sin couches at the door: its urge is toward you; yet you can be its master" (Gen. 4:7). Therefore, when Cain proceeds to murder his brother, God "has the right" to confront him with his responsibility for this murder, the first ever committed. In a famous Midrash, human moral freedom and responsibility are made even more explicit. Before conception takes place, "the seminal drop is brought before the Holy One; there and then it is decided, concerning this one, whether it will be strong or weak, wise or foolish, rich or poor—but not whether it will be wicked or righteous."³ Or, as the famous Talmudic statement puts it, even more succinctly, "All is in the hands of Heaven—except the fear of Heaven."⁴ The clear and consistent assumption behind all of the Torah's commands and prohibitions is, thus, that human beings have the freedom to obey or disobey them.⁵

VI

But what if one violates the Torah's command involuntarily, due to circumstances beyond one's control, or with no other options available? Is one still culpable? And is the act still punishable? The Torah-tradition contains numerous examples of such involuntary offenders, who have done what was forbidden or failed to do what was commanded, out of constraint and lack of freedom (*me-ones*). The cases discussed involve varying degrees and kinds of constraint: threat of torture or death, extreme financial duress; mistaken impression of the facts; forgetfulness; insanity; intoxication; illness; accident; and other factors beyond one's control. Although the halakhic authorities differ as to whether the factor of *ones* should be the governing consideration in any particular case—and whether, therefore, the offender is to be fully exempt, is to be held fully responsible, or partially both—a frequently invoked principle is that "in cases of *ones* the Merciful One exempts."⁶ The underlying principle is, apparently, that when forbidden acts are performed in the absence of

3. B. *Niddah* 16b.

4. B. *Berakhot* 33b.

5. For a further discussion of the problem of determinism, freedom, judgment, and providence, see "Man's Role in God's Design," JUDAISM, XXI, 2, (Spring 1972).

6. B. *Nedarim* 27a.

voluntary choice and free decision, or in the absence of other options, the offenders are judged more leniently than otherwise.

VII

The tradition does not appear ever to have looked upon homosexual behavior in such a light. It appears, rather, to have *assumed* that whenever homosexual acts are performed they are engaged in willingly and willfully, through a free choice from among several options. It is only in our own generation that homosexual behavior has been found to involve not merely a single, overt act, or a series of such acts, but often to reflect a profound inner condition and basic psychic orientation, involving the deepest levels of personality. However deep and numerous are the differences among contemporary experts on homosexuality,⁷ on one aspect there seems to be *near-unanimity*: that *for very many homosexuals the prospects of change to heterosexuality are almost nil*.

Now, with regard to one group of homosexuals (and bi-sexuals), those whose sexual behavior represents deliberate rejection of the Torah's standard and a simple indulgence in the hedonistic ethic of "doing whatever gives me pleasure"—and who, if they chose to, *could* live a heterosexual life—it is clear that from any viewpoint that acknowledges the authority of the Torah the traditional prohibition remains in full force. With regard to another group, those for whom the homosexual way has been, psychologically speaking, the "easier" way—but who, with professional help or with strenuous effort, could manage to change—the Torah's standard also remains in effect. With regard to other homosexuals, however, (constituting probably the majority), who are under the constraint of remaining homosexual indefinitely, presumably for life—their only other option being sexual abstinence for life—is there anything less stringent that could, and should, be said by contemporary Torah-interpreters and Torah-observers?

VIII

For one thing, a truly Torah approach, taking seriously the injunction of the Torah-tradition not to judge another person until one stands in his place,⁸ would acknowledge that no human being is able to know the

7. They differ on the causes (some positing a hormonal or other hereditary factor; some stressing a seriously inadequate or disturbed parental relationship in the earliest years; some pointing to early traumatic sexual experience; some insisting that the causes are thus far simply unknown). They differ on the possibilities for changing to heterosexuality (some insisting that no true homosexual can change; some claiming that all who truly desire to, can be professionally enabled to; many acknowledging that, at most, perhaps a quarter or third can change). They differ on the appropriate treatment methods for those who seek to change (psychoanalysis, analytic forms of psychotherapy, behavior modification).

8. *Avot* 2:5.

exact degree of another's freedom; that God alone has that knowledge; that God alone, therefore, has the ability and the right to judge a person's culpability; and that none of us humans, therefore, ought presume to judge a homosexual or automatically regard a homosexual as a sinner—since, as already implied, sin involves not only overt action but also intention, decision, and responsibility.⁹

Furthermore, a Torah approach would look with deep compassion (*rahmanut*) upon the plight of many homosexuals in our society. It would share the anguish of a human being who for years—perhaps since early adolescence—has had to live with a growing sense of being different and “queer;” in constant fear of being discovered; knowing that, if discovered, one might well be looked down upon as perverted, loathsome, dangerous; with the consequent fear of being mistreated, humiliated and ridiculed, perhaps blackmailed, excluded or expelled from many types of employment, and denied acceptance and friendship. (“The Lord seeks the pursued”¹⁰ and we should imitate Him in this regard.)

Not content with withholding judgment and with feeling compassion, a genuinely Jewish approach to homosexuality would require us to *demonstrate* such feelings of compassion by willingly associating with homosexuals and engaging in acts of kindness and friendship—so that the particular individuals whom we meet will not feel grudgingly tolerated but will see that they are included within the circle of our love.

But even more is required, if our Jewish responsibility to homosexuals is to be fulfilled. For it is not enough to attend to our own attitude and behavior; we must be equally concerned with what is felt and done by others, keeping ourselves from falling into the category of those “in whose power it was to protest but did not protest.” True, we cannot force a change of heart upon others nor control their actions; we can, however, make a genuine effort to dispel the popular myths and repeal the legal disabilities that have made the life of many homosexuals into a living hell. We now know, for example, that most male homosexuals are not “effeminate” in gait, voice, manner, or dress; that most female homosexuals are not “masculine;” that homosexuality does not mean promiscuity. We should, therefore, avoid such stereotypes in conversation or in attempts at “humor.” We now know that the incidence of crimes such as murder, robbery, rape, molestation, and seduction is no higher among homosexuals than among heterosexuals; we should, therefore, work for the immediate repeal of laws, rules, and practices that exclude or discriminate against homosexuals on the contrary assumption. Similarly, in acknowl-

9. Even though the tradition does at times refer to sins committed “unknowingly,” “under compulsion,” or “inadvertently,” the sinfulness of such sins consists, presumably, in sinful decisions made previously, when a greater degree of freedom obtained; or in a *culpable* degree of ignorance or negligence; or in a lack of concern for harm inflicted even though inflicted unintentionally.

10. Ecclesiastes 3:15; Leviticus *Rabbah*, Sec. 27.

edgement of the relative victimlessness of homosexual relations between consenting adults and in opposition to unnecessary government intrusion upon individual privacy, we should, as Jews, vigorously oppose any legal penalties for such homosexual behavior.¹¹

IX

If a homosexual, then, is to be considered neither sinner nor criminal, how *shall* he or she be looked upon? As sick, perhaps?

The label "sick" has some obvious advantages over the other two: if considered sick, the homosexual is saved from being religiously damned, morally condemned, or legally doomed to punishment. But "sick" has serious disadvantages, too. For the sick we prescribe treatment and therapy; upon the sick we often impose restriction, separation, even isolation; toward the sick we feel superiority and show condescension; in the presence of the sick we feel fear. And if these actions and attitudes are true concerning the *physically* ill, how much more so concerning those who are considered mentally, emotionally, psychologically ill. Realizing that the uniqueness of human beings is related to their mind, psyche, conscience and "soul," we tend automatically and recklessly to expand and exaggerate the dimensions of their "emotional illness" and to assume that these "sick people" are maladjusted and malfunctioning in almost all regards and all relationships. We tend, therefore, to shudder in their presence, on the cruel assumption that their illness calls into question their actual humanity. (Do we, perhaps, shudder also from a subconscious fear of becoming like them, or from subconscious horror and guilt at already being at least somewhat like them?)

In the face of these negative connotations of the word "sick" and the negative consequences of applying it to homosexuals, it is quite understandable that hosts of homosexuals bitterly resent and utterly reject such a label, and that even the American Psychiatric Association has, in recent years, removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses.

But if the term "sickness" is to be eliminated, what, then, shall be substituted? Some of the terms that have been used—such as defect or perversion—have so many negative connotations and result in so many negative attitudes that they are hardly an improvement over what they replace. Shall we say, then—as urged by many homosexuals, many sexual liberationists and radicals, and some professional experts—that

11. It is sometimes urged that even though certain laws concerning morality should not be enforced, they should, nevertheless, not be repealed, because a) keeping them on the books serves a moral-pedagogic function; and b) removing them would imply full moral approval of the now decriminalized behavior, thus actually encouraging the young and the "weak" to engage in such acts. Whatever the measure of validity in such an argument, it is outweighed by two considerations: a) the retention of laws that have become recognized as unjust or inappropriate increases disdain for the legal system; and b) avoidance of actual harm to known victims must take priority over possible harm to unknown victims.

homosexuals should not be singled out at all; that they should receive no special attention, treatment, consideration, description, or label; that their orientation and behavior should be considered equally acceptable with heterosexuality as simply an “alternative life style”?

X

It is tempting to say “yes”, thus avoiding the accusation of indifference and insensitivity to the anguish that so many homosexuals have undergone, and to the discrimination, deprivation, ostracism, and even persecution that have contributed to that anguish.

And yet—once again—a Jew who seeks to be faithful to the Torah and to the divine word which he affirms to be contained therein, though obliged to guard against the temptation of cruelty and lack of compassion, must also guard against the temptation of reckless relativism and simplistic sentimentality. The most truly Jewish stance would be one that takes with equal seriousness both the authority of traditional standards and the significance of modern knowledge. As already indicated, such a stance would maintain the traditional view of heterosexuality as the God-intended norm and yet would incorporate the contemporary recognition of homosexuality as, clinically speaking, a sexual deviance, malfunctioning, or abnormality—usually unavoidable and often irremediable.

Such an approach has a number of advantages. It remains faithful to the Torah-teaching that heterosexuality is, in principle, not merely recommended but commanded, and that homosexuality is not merely discouraged but forbidden. It places upon men and women who become aware of their homosexual tendencies the responsibility for striving, on their own or with the aid of professional counselors, to develop or strengthen their heterosexual tendencies. It removes from those homosexuals who, after making such efforts, find that they cannot change, all burden of blame and guilt¹²—accepting them as they are. It avoids at least some of the negative connotations of “mental illness.” It acknowledges that unalterable homosexuality remains theologically unaccountable. And it warns all of us—both homosexuals and heterosexuals—against self-righteousness.

XI

In seeking to do justice to this double claim, the heterosexual majority faces several difficult dilemmas. One is whether homosexuals should *ever* be excluded from any particular roles in society.

Granted, as has been indicated earlier, that such exclusion is, in most

12. Paradoxically, and yet perhaps understandably, such removal of blame and guilt, and the combination of self-acceptance and acceptance by others, has in *some instances*, been followed by a changeover to heterosexuality!

cases, unnecessarily cruel and unjustly discriminatory, based on myth or prejudice and, therefore, completely unwarranted and indeed intolerable, are there, nevertheless, a certain few roles—such as teacher, youth leader, or religious guide—which are likely to be so influential upon the lives of young people that when such positions are held by an avowed homosexual those young people whose sexual orientation is not yet set may be influenced toward a homosexual orientation—not through any conscious intention, deliberate effort, or seductive behavior on the part of the homosexual (popular fear of such dangers is based, as we have seen, on myth and prejudice), but simply through functioning as authority figures and role models?

A solution to this dilemma is not easy. Some experts argue that the influence of role models such as teachers or youth leaders is likely to be crucial in a child's life. Others argue that there is little evidence to indicate who are most likely actually to function as role models, and that heroes-at-a-distance, often "present" through the media, can be no less significant as role models than the usual "significant persons" in a child's life. Still others argue that sexual orientation is set at a very early age—according to some, by the age of two!—and is, therefore, very unlikely to be affected by subsequent contact with any other person, however "significant." In the absence of any clear evidence as to harmful effects upon young people, and in the presence of clear evidence of harmful effects upon homosexuals who have been excluded from a host of jobs, we would advocate that the only roles from which homosexuals should be excluded are those of adoptive or foster parent and of religious leader—since these two roles of parent and rabbi are, by definition, meant to serve as models of what a Jewish woman or man should be. And even the role of rabbi should be open to a homosexual *if* he or she honestly holds the conviction—and would conscientiously seek to convey it to others—that, in spite of his or her own homosexuality, the Jewish ideal for man and woman is heterosexuality. (After all, it is accepted that a single or divorced person can legitimately and effectively serve as rabbi provided that he or she holds up marriage as the ideal, and that a childless person may serve as rabbi as long as he or she holds up having children as the ideal.)

XII

For the organized Jewish community a further problem arises, in connection with a request—or demand—which, though formerly unheard of and until recently, indeed, inconceivable, has now been presented by some homosexuals and is likely to be made with increasing frequency and forcefulness: that national synagogue organizations accept congregations of homosexuals as local affiliates. What would be a proper response to this very real dilemma? On the one hand, is not a homosexual synagogue a contradiction in terms? Since Judaism considers heterosex-

uality to be the norm, how can it accept as legitimate a group which, by name and public identification, represents, celebrates, and makes a principle of its deviation from that norm? And yet, does not any group of Jews have a right to form a congregation and the further right to affiliate, on the same basis as others, with a union of congregations?

Our response to this dilemma would be threefold: a) it would be far preferable for homosexuals to be welcome and feel welcome in existing congregations rather than to feel a need to form their own gay synagogues; b) since the present reality, however, is that such a welcome is not assured and is perhaps even unlikely, the formation of gay congregations is legitimate; and c) a gay congregation, to be eligible for affiliation with a union of congregations, however, must not—by rule, name, practice, or implication—restrict its own membership or leadership to homosexuals.

XIII

There remains one further, far more radical, request—again, often couched as a demand—that has been made by some Jewish homosexuals: that rabbis solemnize and all Jews recognize “marriages” between homosexuals, and that congregations admit such couples to “family memberships.” Is there any way in which the notion of a homosexual “marriage” could be considered Jewish valid?

When we speak of “Jewishly valid” with reference to an officially solemnized, publicly recognized pattern of behavior, we must be speaking in terms of traditional Jewish law, the *halakhah*. Now, though the *halakah* has developed and “changed” over the ages, through Rabbinic interpretation of Biblical law and Rabbinic enactment for the public welfare, nevertheless, in the three thousand years of recorded *halakhic* teaching and practice there is apparently not a single instance of *halakhic* provision for the legitimization of a homosexual relationship. And even if the flexibility and resourcefulness of the *halakhah* were renewed and increased—as befits the “Torah of Life”—it is hardly conceivable that a homosexual departure from the Torah’s heterosexual norm would ever be accepted by *halakhically* faithful Jews or ever be recognized as *k’dat moshe v’yisrael* (in accordance with the law of Moses and Israel).

XIV

How will Jewish homosexuals who cherish both Torah-and-commandments and the Community of the People of Israel, but who must live with the reality of their homosexual condition—how will they be likely to respond to such a categorical *halakhic* “no”?

Some will probably be so embittered that they may turn their backs on the whole Jewish “establishment” or on Judaism itself. But, perhaps, some

may trouble themselves to formulate a response, in the hope of making their position understood, to the “straight” majority of their fellow Jews. And their response might go something like this.

“Granted that marriage in Judaism has always been heterosexual; and granted that one of the major purposes of marriage has been procreation—in order both to populate the world and to pass on the Covenant way of life. But is that the sole purpose and meaning of Jewish marriage? What of the legitimacy of sexual pleasure and release—is that not also Jewish? (Long-term abstinence is no more feasible, bearable, or desirable for homosexuals than for heterosexuals.) And does not marriage have other purposes as well: the fostering of mutual affection, care, trust, sacrifice, and support; the encouragement and sustenance of growth—intellectual, esthetic, moral, and spiritual; the sharing of pain and anxiety; the nurturing of joy and hope; the overcoming of loneliness—all of these on the basis of an enduring commitment of faithfulness? And is not marriage the primary and preferred—and, indeed, the only fully acceptable—context for furthering these purposes? If it is the Torah-teaching that the fullest possible meaning of personhood is to be found in and through marriage, shall we, because we are homosexuals, be denied the right to seek such meaning and to develop such personhood? If God, in whose image we homosexuals, too, are created, has directly or indirectly caused or willed or allowed us to be what we cannot help being—men and women unable to function heterosexually—can we believe, and can you heterosexuals believe, that He wants us to be denied the only possible arrangement whereby we can live as deeply a human life as we are capable of?

“If, as you heterosexuals claim, our condition constitutes a deviance and malfunctioning and abnormality, do we not have the God-given right—indeed, the obligation—to attempt to live with, adjust to, make the best of, and rise above this “handicap” of ours, just as all of the other handicapped are expected to do?

“If the halakhah can provide marriage only for heterosexuals and cannot speak to our condition, then in this one regard we must live non-halakhically; but we are Jews and we insist on avowing our homosexual condition and our homosexual union, openly and unashamedly, within the Covenant Community of the People of Israel.¹³ In our eyes—

13. When such open and unashamed avowal of homosexuality takes the form of public protest, demonstration, and proclamation, many heterosexuals—even those who have come to grant the validity of such basic gay rights as non-discrimination in housing, employment, and public office—become resentful, impatient, and angry at what they consider the “constant parading” by gays of their homosexuality. They often fail to realize that such public display is a reflection of the grim reality that denial of these basic rights is still widespread and has only very recently been reduced. When the rights of gays will have been fully accepted and their changed status inwardly assimilated by both straights and gays, both groups will obviously feel less threatened. At that point the need for public demonstration by gays will certainly diminish and perhaps even disappear.

and, we feel sure, in God's eyes, too—our homosexual bond is worthy, proper, and even holy. We believe that for us, who wish to live as Jews and love as Jews but who, by virtue of our homosexual condition, are not in a position to beget or bear any offspring, God has a word that is no less accepting and no less reassuring than His word to the eunuchs in the Babylonian Exile:

'Let the eunuch not say: behold, I am a withered tree; for thus says the Lord: as regards the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, who have chosen what I desire, and hold fast to My covenant, I will give them, in My house and within My walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters... an everlasting name that shall not perish.' "¹⁴

14. Isaiah 56:3-5.

A Theology of Jewish Liberation

LEVI A. OLAN

LIBERATION THEOLOGY IS THE LATEST ARRIVAL on the theological scene. Its chief protagonists speak from within the Black and Latin American experience. Professor William Jones of Yale abruptly asks, "Is God a white racist?" and Gutierrez presses beyond bewildered inquiry toward social action. Should Jewish theology follow in the path now vigorously pursued by liberation theologies? Professor Jones has suggested the tantalizing question: "Is God an anti-Semite?" while Elie Wiesel tells of the Jew who admonishes his fellow worshippers to pray very quietly for God may hear them and learn that there are still some Jews left over. The demand that God justify His way with man is rooted deeply in Jewish experience. It began with Abraham at Sodom, it was repeated by Jeremiah, Job, and Levi Yizhak of Berdichev. The right to question God derives from the Jews' experience with Him as *Goel*, redeemer. Jewish theology is, by its very nature, Liberation theology. It is the acknowledged source of all modern liberation theology, Black, Latin American and all others. Yahweh's choice of the smallest enslaved people to be His people attests to His purpose in history. He revealed Himself to them in the historic act of liberation and Jewish tradition has piously preserved this original experience with its liberating God.

Jewish religious thought is dynamic, in contrast to Greek philosophy which is static. It derives from action as against contemplation, it is concrete and not abstract, its dynamics are made vital by its absorbing concern with history and God's role in it. Modern liberation theology expresses a protest against the abstractions of classical (Greek) religious thought. The oppressed of the world hunger after the God who revealed Himself to Israel in their deliverance from slavery. "Only the white middle class, or the affluent," writes Herzog, "can afford to start with the self in the search for the meaning of God . . . the more self-certainty that could be had, the less God-certainty was necessary. One needs leisure and privacy to find self-certainty."¹ God is a live issue only where life is not secure, where man is not permitted to become complacent, and when he realizes that he is not in control of his own life. Richard Niebuhr and James Cone deny the possibility of disinterested theology. It is always, they claim, a reflection of the goals and aspirations of a particular people in a definite social setting.² Modern Jewish theology, in this view, should reflect the particular experience of the Jew in current history.

1. F. Herzog, *Liberation Theology* (N.Y., 1972), p. 2.

2. R. Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (N.Y., 1941), p. 35 and J.H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (N.Y., 1975), p. 39.

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The present condition of the Jew in the world may be described as enslavement by a power more ruthless than Pharaoh, and more resistant to the liberating efforts of either man or God. The modern tyranny oppressing the Jew is more like an incurable disease. Chaim Weizmann shrewdly recognized it. "I believe," he wrote, "that the only fundamental cause of anti-Semitism . . . is the existence of the Jews. We carry anti-Semitism around in our packs everywhere we go."³ Leo Pinsker isolated Judeo-phobia as one of the subconscious and superstitious ideas, interests, and idiosyncrasies which have become rooted and naturalized among all the people of the earth with whom Jews have intercourse. It is a form of "demonopathy," a "psychic aberration," a hereditary disease transmitted for two thousand years. It is incurable, and his prescription calls for the removal of the Jew from "the whole body of the nations" that there shall never be any further basis for the Jewish question.⁴

One's first impulse is to dismiss this as unwarranted exaggeration. It is, of course, sensible to be aware of, and alerted to, anti-Semitism and its threat to Jewish existence. But to denote it as an incurable disease sounds like forensic hyperbole. On second thought, recent events tend to confirm the fatal diagnosis. Commenting on Kafka's *The Trial*, Sartre writes:

Legally not open to attack, he (Jew) is at the whims and passions of the "real" society. He carefully watches the progress of anti-Semitism; he tries to foresee crises and gauge trends in the same way that the peasant keeps watch on the weather and predicts storms. He ceaselessly calculates the effects that external events will have on his own position . . . his success is empty for he will never acquire the security enjoyed by the most humble Christian.⁵

Whatever it is—phobia, demon, disease—the infection is universal. Even the best carry a little!

The case history of the disease, anti-Semitism, is available now in a growing body of literature. All of its separate elements—religious, economic, social, national, and racial—have been fused in the modern world into a single passion: get rid of the Jews. Edouard Drumont was certain that if all the Jews were driven out of France, or crushed out of existence, peace and prosperity would follow. "The Roumanians would be perfectly happy," he wrote, "and so would the French if the Jews did not exist."⁶ It is the ethics of expediency, and in the world of practical politics it is unanswerable. Bertrand Russell speculated with bitter irony that "if it were certain that without Jews the world would be a paradise, there would be no valid objection to Auschwitz."⁷ Christians said, "You cannot live among us as Jews." Secularists said: "You cannot live among us." Germans said: "You have no right to live." A Christian theologian summarizes the case

3. Quoted by Albert Memmi, *The Liberation of the Jew* (N.Y., 1966), p. 269.

4. In Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea* (N.Y., 1959), pp. 184-5.

5. J.-P. Sartre, *Anti-Semitism and the Jews* (N.Y., 1948), pp. 87-8.

6. Quoted by M. Hay, *The Foot of Pride* (Boston, 1950), p. 179.

7. B. Russell, *Philosophy and Politics* (London, 1947), p. 25.

history of the disease: "The roots of Hitler's solution are to be found, I must fearfully confess, in the proclamation of the Kerygma of the earliest Christians."⁸

A radical social change induces traumatic reactions in that portion of the population which is demoted from its privileged position. When the mediaeval world of Christendom was giving way to the liberal, industrial society, certain classes of the people felt threatened—clerics, landowners, and the lower middle class artisans. Jews as beneficiaries of Emancipation and Secularization "came to be fantasized as a kind of insidious disease flowing into the veins of Christian Europe, sapping its spiritual, moral, and economic energy . . . everything which these threatened groups hated in the new society was intrinsically Jewish."⁹ Now the first symptoms of the dissolution of the liberal industrial society are beginning to appear. Prophecies of doom are currently both popular and unpopular. What is unmistakable is that a very radical change in the character of the social order is taking place. An old way of living seems to be dissolving, a new order is not yet recognizable. But the tell-tale signs of fear, frustration, anger, and alienation are clearly noticeable, especially among those whose privileged positions are seriously threatened.

The stage is almost ready for the entrance of the traditional scapegoat. Though the script has not yet been written, it will probably be a re-run of the old one. Another charismatic dictator will refurbish the old slogan, "The Jews are our misfortune," thus setting in motion another attempt at the final solution. Currently, a few signals are being flashed. An angry, frustrated Third World, responding to the incitement of Palestinian Liberators and Soviet Commissars, is exploiting a demoralized world order to fan the flames of anti-Semitism. The western nations who tremble before the prospect of critical shortages of food and energy are more restrained, but expediency may unite them with strident voices when the crisis is upon them. Alice and Roy Eckardt, following a visit to the land of the final solution, reported their reactions.

(It) is to be made especially sensitive for the repetition. A closing judgment is prompted by current world events. The phases of the Nazi program—the identification of the Jews as a threatening "race," the boycott, the undermining of Jewish integrity and of respect for Jews as human beings, the isolating and excluding of Jews from the human community, their eventual destruction—are being replicated today. But the process now takes place on a world scale, not just upon a European or German scale. Before our eyes the *Endlösung* is being re-enacted.¹⁰

Survival is still the primary and unrelenting problem facing the modern Jew. In the past he had a long-term solution and a short-term

8. P. Van Buren, "Address to Theology Section of the American Academy of Religion," Chicago, Nov. 1, 1975, *CCI Notebook*, No. 24, Nov. 1975.

9. R. Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide* (N.Y., 1974), p. 28.

10. *Christian Century*, March 17, 1976: 249-252.

strategy. In his most desperate hour he called upon his faith in the divine promise of messianic liberation, but until the arrival of that day he devised tactical strategies to stay alive. These differed according to time and place. The two-fold program of faith and strategy characterized European Jewry until Hitler emptied that part of the world of almost all of its Jews. In Western Europe, where the Enlightenment and Emancipation took root, Jews began, hopefully, to scent the disappearance of the demon which had enslaved them during their bloody years in Christendom. They substituted secular programs of liberation for the traditional messianic promise. As they fled the confining ghettos they enthusiastically embraced the revolutionary slogan—"Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity"—for all people, including themselves. Some hastened to erase from the liturgy all references to the Messiah or of a return to Jerusalem, since the Kingdom of God and the Brotherhood of man were present realities, or, at least, around the corner. But it did not take long for the Jew to discover the old demon hidden in the brilliant hope of liberation. The universal vision was quickly converted into a narrow nationalism espousing a modern form of anti-Semitism. Germany marched to the boisterous shout, *Hep Hep—Jude Verrecke*. It ended, as we now know, in the Nazi call for the total annihilation of the Jew everywhere in the world.

Another group of Jews were attracted by the possibility of a classless society, a secular version of the Kingdom of God. They became active participants with Socialists, Bundists and, later, Communists. Disillusion with the promise of liberation through social radicalism and revolution came early. Paradoxically, the Socialists joined the upper classes in their anti-Semitic passion. For them, the Jew loomed large as the incarnation of oppressive Capitalism. Karl Marx set the tone: "Social emancipation of Jewry is the emancipation of society from Jewry."¹¹ The Jewish experience in Soviet Russia uncovered the old demon hidden within the first experiment in praxis of the Marxist ideal. Andrei Synyavsky (Abram Terz) lets the Russian Communist speak:

"We're infested with Yids!" people will say, as if talking about lice or cockroaches. . . . The Yid is the hidden irritant in the peaceful life of Russia, which, were there no Yids, would all go smoothly. And if those demons would only go away, we should be in paradise.¹²

The most positive strategy for Jewish survival in the modern world, and the one with the greatest promise for success, is Zionism. It represents a secularization of the traditional messianic faith. As projected by Pinsker, liberation of the Jew must come through "Auto-Emancipation." Since the Jew cannot be assimilated or digested among the nations in which he lives, salvation lies in the creation of an independent Jewish National State with

11. K. Marx, *A World Without Jews* (N.Y., 1956), pp. 37, 45.

12. A. Synyavsky, "The Jews and the Devil," *N. Y. Review of Books*, 6 (Apr. 15, 1976): 11.

the power to make treaties, and to protect its citizens by commerce, and all other political instruments that states employ to safeguard the security of their people. This state was born in 1948 and has endured bravely, resolutely, and with the confidence that it will achieve emancipation and security for the Jew in the world. In a hostile world, it has demonstrated the validity of the claim of Auto-Emancipation as the most successful strategy thus far. But here, too, alas, the hidden demon cannot be ignored. The continued existence of this small state is dependent upon the course of international politics. Experience, both past and present, does not encourage unwavering confidence in a favorable resolution; the signals being flashed are discouraging.

None of the secular substitutes for the messianic hope—political, economic, and national—have demonstrated their effectiveness in the battle against anti-Semitism which has been transformed into a universal and, seemingly, incurable disease. In virulence it varies from the mild, exclusionary policies of country clubs and executive suites to the loud preachments of neo-Fascists who echo the racial doctrines of the Nazis. There is no immunity for Jews anywhere in the world. Another attempt at the “final solution” awaits the success or failure of the resolution of critical problems, domestic and international, agitating all nations.

At the moment, Jews are in frightful disarray and a pressing need for the Jewish community is a critical re-evaluation of the current strategies of Jewish survival. Institutions tend to suffer from bureaucratic lethargy, maintaining programs which have outlived their usefulness. A glaring example is the continued effort to change Christian attitudes toward Jews. The success, in the past, of this program has been something less than glorious and the truth is that this strategy is irrelevant in contemporary secularistic culture. The Jew is rejected, not because he is a heretic, but because he carries an infectious disease. There is a proper place for an intelligent discussion by theologians of all religions about belief and practice, but as a strategy for Jewish survival, Jewish-Christian dialogue has been long out-dated. The best talents of modern Jews are needed to discover a disinfectant or a process of immunization against the growing virulence of an old disease—anti-Semitism. The prospects of success are, for the present, in doubt.

Theology has not been a major enterprise of the Jewish people. Unlike Christianity, Judaism is not enwrapped in deep mysteries—Incarnation, Resurrection—which put a strain on rational explanations. There were periods in our history when the culture of the people among whom the Jew lived challenged the validity of his religious beliefs. Hellenism, Scholasticism and German Idealism brought responses from Philo, Maimonides, and Hermann Cohen, whose writings reflect the classical philosophy of their time. Except for Cohen, there is little discussion of the distinctive prophetic view of the God of history. In general, the Jew devoted himself to “what” (halakhah) God required of him, not “why”

(philosophy) He required it. Judaism in the modern world, along with all theistic religions, is being seriously challenged by a growing secularism. The claim to the truth of the existence of God as reality needs to be examined thoughtfully by religious thinkers within the frame of the cultural climate of our day.

The major thrust of modern theology aims to meet the challenge of the non-believer, of the “man come of age.” It glistens with the patina of academe and reflects the culture of the middle class, the upper rather than the lower. It is the concern of those who meet Descartes’ requirement for the philosopher—“free born from care, and assured of untroubled leisure in perfect solitude.” Van Harvey believes that “the problem of western academic theology in America, and the west in general, is that it cannot break out of its own bourgeois world and bring a transcendent world of judgment and renewal to the conditions that create the ‘life world’ of western men and women.”¹³ The vast majority of people in the world are not disturbed by doubts either ontological or cosmological. The challenge confronting the modern theologian comes

from the man who is not a man, who is not recognized as such by the existing social order; he is in the ranks of the poor, the exploited; he is the man who is systematically despoiled of his being as a man, who scarcely knows that he is a man. . . . The question, therefore, is not how to speak of God in an adult world, but how to proclaim Him as a father in a world that is not human.¹⁴

The people in Latin America and the Blacks in America are not unbelievers. The question which they want answered is “Am I a man?” More than half of the population is imprisoned in an oppressive, unrelenting poverty. A half million of them die from starvation every year. Their theological problem arises from the “life world.” What does it mean to speak of God, the Father, if you are not considered to be a human and your suffering and death are no more important than that of cockroaches? The mainstream of modern theology is fixed in its own “bourgeois entrapment.”

Jewish theology belongs historically and existentially with modern-day liberation theology. Judaism proclaimed God who is Redeemer as Creator. His first act, Creation, is inseparable from the second, Liberation. The Jew today is imprisoned in a demonic slave camp—anti-Semitism—from which there appears to be no deliverance. Saul Bellow, reflecting on his experience in the State of Israel writes:

Under Hitler the Jews were the lepers of Europe. No, they were worse than lepers. Lepers are isolated, nursed, treated. There is no word for what the Jews were in Europe between 1939 and 1945 . . . after the war the survivors

13. V.A. Harvey, “What is the Task of Theology?” *Christianity and Crisis*, 36 (May 24, 1976): 119.

14. G. Gutierrez, “Liberation Theology and Proclamation,” in *Mystical and Political Dimension of Christian Faith* (N.Y., 1974), p. 69.

fled Europe. They were not welcomed in other countries. They went to Palestine—Israel.

Creative artists are often reliable prophets. Bellow as artist and Jew records in words something that crosses the mind of many Jews today.

Wouldn't it be the most horrible of ironies if the Jews had collected themselves conveniently in one country for a second Holocaust. . . . You cannot take your right to live for granted. Others can, you cannot. This is not to say that everyone else is living pleasantly and well under a decent regime. No, it means only that the Jews, because they are Jews, have never been able to take the right to live as a natural right.¹⁵

Never in the past, and not today! Jewish theology is always liberation theology.

Jewish religious thinkers responded after Auschwitz. Richard Rubenstein rejects the prophets' view of God in history. Emil Fackenheim and Eliezer Berkovits, following Martin Buber, revive the Biblical *El Mistater*, the Hidden God. Neither of these is an adequate response to the challenge. If God plays no role in human history, then Auschwitz is neither evil nor good since it took place in a world which is dumbly indifferent to the affairs of mice or men. A God who hides Himself while six million men are marched into gas chambers to be put to death calls for more explanation than mystery. Job did not stop with "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." He wanted more! "I will argue my ways before Him," he declared. A more critical objection to the *El Mistater* response is its rootage in the apocalyptic, which is the answer when there is no answer. It places its trust in the eruption of the supernatural into history. It is an admission of defeat, of giving up, of surrender, man helpless and without resources in himself. The prophets rejected this view, as they did the comfortable belief in *Yom Yahweh*, the day when God would deliver them if they were cultically observant. They projected the view that man's moral regeneration is a prerequisite to the divinely promised liberation of Israel, as well as of all humanity.

Liberation theology, today, is being fashioned by those who know God as Liberator. They view history *coram deo*, in the presence of God. Echoing the prophetic proclamation, Latin American and Black theologians affirm divine judgment and human transformation. Jewish theology, conscious of the ever present threat of another attempt at the "final solution," needs to ally itself with all who know the God who is Liberator and Creator. It dare not view the anti-Semitic demon in isolation. There are other demons (or is it the same one?) enslaving and oppressing many people all over the world. Two bonds unite all of them—a common need for liberation, and a shared sense of the historical process which envelops them. Though sinned against, no one of them is without sin. There is

15. S. Bellow, in *The New Yorker* (July 19, 1976): 68.

serious danger in the desire for separation which each oppressed group favors, and in the more destructive practice of blaming another enslaved community as the oppressor.

It remains to be seen, (writes Rosemary Ruether), how willing Liberation theologians will be to co-operate with this massacre of the others and ultimately, of themselves . . . only together . . . does this enlargement of the boundaries of the world and "God" cease to be fashionable verbiage and become a concrete stake in the changing world.¹⁶

David Ben Gurion said it succinctly and clearly:

One central aspect of Jewish studies, which is perhaps the soul of Judaism, the source from which our people had drawn the will and the capacity to renew the commonwealth of Israel in our days, namely the messianic vision of the redemption of our people and all the peoples of the world as enunciated by Israel's prophets, is the redemption for Jewry and all mankind. . . . This dual messianic vision is, in reality, one, for there can be no redemption for one people without the redemption for all mankind, and the whole of humanity will not be redeemed unless each of its member peoples is redeemed.¹⁷

16. R. Ruether, "What is the Task of Theology," *Christianity and Crisis*, 36, 9 (May 24, 1976): 124

17. *Israel Digest*, IV, 16 (Aug. 4, 1961).

*Jews and Civil Liberties: American and Israeli Jewish Attitudes**

RITA J. SIMON

IN THE SPRING OF 1975, THE FIRST NATIONAL survey dealing with public attitudes toward civil liberties issues was conducted in Israel. The basic findings of that survey were published in the *Jewish Frontier* in October, 1975.¹ Essentially, what the results showed was that there was a high degree of awareness and respect for fundamental, individual civil liberties on the part of the Israeli public. There was also a good deal of tolerance for criticism of social conditions, a consciousness of the need to respect politically deviant viewpoints, a preference for limiting police activity in favor of private rights, and marked support for the involvement of judicial processes when an individual's rights are limited.

In the *Jewish Frontier* article we indicated that, in several important instances, Israeli public opinion showed a greater desire to protect individual rights than was reflected in existing legislation. We noted that:

Considering the circumstance in which there is no formal constitutional statement of individual civil liberties, the presence of legislation that permits for substantial incursions into individual civil liberties, and objective security conditions that require restrictions on individual freedom, the level of expressed belief in individual liberties and freedoms is remarkably high.

The purpose of this article is to compare the responses of American Jews to civil liberties issues, as they have appeared in the context of American society, with the response of the Israelis, using what limited data are available. American Jews, for a long time, certainly since the 1930s, have had the reputation of being super-liberal on matters pertaining to civil rights, especially when Blacks were the target of discriminatory practices. The American Jewish Congress filed briefs of *amici curiae* supporting the appellants in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the case in which the Supreme Court in 1954 repudiated the "separate but equal" doctrine. Jews were among the founders and leaders of the National Association for the

* The author wishes to thank Professor Neal Rothman of the Mathematics Department for suggesting that a comparison of Israeli and American Jewish responses would be interesting to examine.

1. R. J. Simon and Kenneth Mann, "Civil Liberties in Israel," *Jewish Frontier*, (October, 1975): 8-12.

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Advancement of Colored People. In his collective portrait of *The American Jews*, James Yaffe describes the role that Jews have played in civil rights.

The evidence in favor of the Jews has been given many times, but it is worth summarizing again. After the war, when the defense agencies switched from a passive to an active strategy on fighting anti-Semitism, they also began to take an interest in improving the lot of the American Negro. In the forties Alexander Pekelis of the American Jewish Congress established its Commission on Law and Social Action, and in collaboration with the NAACP it brought test cases on discrimination to the courts. In a few years AJC and ADL became involved in the same sort of activity. AJC was particularly effective in persuading Jewish businessmen around the country to provide jobs for Negroes, and in instituting training programs to prepare Negroes for those jobs. Then the other human relations agencies took up the cause. The National Council of Jewish Women ran strong pro-civil rights articles in the national publication, which shocked its southern chapters; the Jewish Labor Committee launched an intensive campaign to eliminate discrimination in Jewish unions. Then the synagogues joined in; the Reform movement began by forming a Social Action Committee, the Conservatives followed, and finally the Orthodox, though they tend to be less interested in social action than in religious activities. There is no question that the Jewish organizations were fighting for Negro rights long before any other white organizations, religious or secular, on the American scene.

Even before the organizations stepped in, however, many individual Jews were involved in this fight. For twenty-five years the president of the NAACP has been Jewish; the position is honorary (the executive director and the field representatives who actually do the work have always been Negroes), and simply indicates the heavy Jewish financial support which the organization has always received.

Jewish activists and Jewish money were, until recently, the mainstay of all the other influential civil rights groups, particularly CORE and SNCC. The first organization at CCNY to stage a demonstration against segregation was the campus Hillel. In conjunction with Jackie Robinson they sponsored a huge Passover rally and sold buttons appropriate both to the Jewish holiday and the Negro cause; the buttons contained the legend, "Let my people go." At least half the whites who went to Mississippi in the summer of 1964 to encourage voter registration among Negroes were Jews; the two whites who got killed were Jews. Rabbis representing every type of Jewish congregation, from ultra-Reform to Young Israel, showed up in large numbers; there were more rabbis than any other kind of white clergy. The yarmulke, in fact, became a kind of unofficial symbol of the civil rights movement that summer. The Jewish Theological Seminary had to send two thousand yarmulkes down to Selma, Alabama. Everyone wore them on the march, whites and Negroes alike; they were known as freedom hats.

Up North Jews are almost always on the pro-Negro side of controversial local issues. They are active in neighborhood fair-housing committees. In Detroit and Kansas City they voted for open-housing laws; in Washington, D.C., they favor home rule, which will give political power to the Negro majority. In California, Jews voted two to one against Proposition 14, a bill designed to discriminate against Negroes in housing; the total white vote was two to one in favor of Proposition 14. Jewish unions, on the whole, backed antidiscrimination rules before other unions, and have pioneered in extra training programs for Negroes.

Even in the touchy area of social life the Jewish record is outstanding. Jewish hotels in Miami Beach started taking Negro guests long before the non-Jewish hotels. The Catskill resorts have been open to Negroes for many years. The teen-age groups of several New York Synagogues have been engaged for some time now on projects with teenagers from the black Jews of Harlem. They have had joint dances and parties and spent several weekends together on kosher farms outside the city.²

Perhaps the explanation for the support that American Jews have given to civil rights and for their sympathy with American Blacks derives primarily from a belief that "there, but for the grace of God, go I" plus a strong, inherited, visceral sense of what it is like to be the target or victim of prejudice, hatred, and discrimination. But, perhaps also, the tendency of American Jews to support various types of social welfare programs and to sympathize with underdogs generally is genuinely altruistic, and comes, as Yaffe says, "straight out of the tradition of Zedakah."

By comparing the responses of Israeli Jews and American Jews to questions about individual rights and freedom of expression we can offer some empirical evidence as to which explanation is more accurate. If American Jews have behaved as they have, for example, on civil rights and social issues primarily out of fear and the realization that they are also a minority in an alien and potentially, or possibly, hostile society, then we would expect little relationship between American and Israeli Jewish responses. In Israel, after all, not only are the Jews a majority, but Israel is a Jewish State. Jews occupy all of the positions of power and enjoy sovereignty. But, if Jews act as they do because that is how they interpret their traditional values, then the American and Israeli responses should be closely related. The Torah, the Talmud, and the vast collection of Jewish theological and philosophical writings are part of the collective heritage of both communities. Unfortunately, we cannot compare American Jewish and Israeli Jewish responses on an item by item basis because no survey has been planned for the purpose of making such comparisons. What we can, and will, do in the following paragraphs is present data on comparable issues, and analyze the responses of the two communities.

In 1970, CBS conducted a national survey on civil liberties in which they asked:

1. Do you think everyone should have the right to criticize the government even if the criticism is damaging to our national interest?

They found that 42% of those polled favored complete freedom of speech, 54% opposed, and 4% said they had no opinion. The respondents were also asked, at some time in the interview, about their religious preferences. When responses to the item shown above were tabulated by religion, the results looked liked this:

2. James Yaffee, *The American Jews* (New York, 1968), pp. 282-284.

Religious Preference	For Complete Freedom of Speech (In %)	For Limited Freedom of Speech	No Opinion
Protestant	40	56	4
Catholic	39	56	5
Jew	56	40	4
Other	61	38	1

Jews and "Others," a category made up largely of persons who express no religious preference, are much stronger supporters of free speech than are Catholics and Protestants.

In that same survey, respondents were asked:

2. As long as there appears to be no clear danger of violence, do you think any group, no matter how extreme, should be allowed to organize protests against the government?

75% of all those surveyed said "no"—the group should not be allowed to organize protests; 21% said "yes" and 4% had no opinion. When the responses of Protestants, Catholics, Jews and Others were compared, Jews had the highest percentage of respondents who supported the right of protest.³

Religion	Favor Dissent	Oppose Dissent	No Opinion
Protestant	19	76	4
Catholic	21	76	3
Jews	44	54	2
Other	34	65	1

Items on the Civil Liberties Poll, conducted in Israel in 1975, to which these questions may be compared are described below.

How suspicious would you be of a citizen's loyalty to Israel if that person who lives in Israel

A — favors direct talks with representatives of the PLO,

B — argues in favor of establishing a Palestinian state on the West Bank,

C — is a teacher who tells his students that there are many things wrong in Israel,

D — goes around talking against religion.

E — claims that Israeli Arabs are discriminated against.

Items A and B offer the best comparison with item one of the American data because both questions ask about behaviors that are clearly viewed as "damaging to national interests." The Israeli responses looked like this:

3. A similar item appeared in a national poll conducted by Louis Harris in December, 1967. The only potential dissenters named were those who opposed the Vietnam war, a war which, by that time, had become quite unpopular. 54% of all those polled said that "people have the right to conduct peaceful demonstrations against the war in Viet Nam." Broken down by religion, the findings showed that 51% of the Protestants, 60% of the Catholics and 81 % of the Jews supported the right of dissent.

Item	Degree of Suspicion				
	Very Suspicious	Somewhat Suspicious	Hardly Suspicious	Not at all Suspicious	Don't Know
	(In %)				
A Favors direct talks with PLO	19	16	15	40	10
B Favors establishment of Palestinian State	22	17	13	39	9
C Teacher says many things wrong in Israel	6	11	12	63	8
D Talks against religion	2	4	6	80	8
E Claims Israeli Arabs are discriminated against	5	13	16	58	8

We see that on the two most sensitive issues (direct talks with the PLO and establishing a Palestinian State on the West Bank) 35 and 39% of the Israelis were "very" or "somewhat" suspicious.⁴ These percentages are similar to the 40% of American Jews who opposed freedom of speech for persons whose criticism might be damaging to national interests. On the other issues included in items A through E, we see that a large majority of the Israeli public expressed support for opinions that were critical of their society.

On that same Israeli survey, the public was asked:

Do you approve or disapprove of the police preventing groups (on the far right, far left, religious groups that oppose the state) from holding public demonstrations?

31% said that they approved of the police action for all or any of the above named groups, 56% disapproved and 13% had no opinion.⁵

None of the items shown above provides any support for the hypothesis that the pro-civil libertarian views of American Jews are a function of the "there but for the grace . . . belief," or of their minority status. We see that the Israeli Jews who enjoy, not only majority status, but sovereignty and political power, responded in much the same way.

We can anticipate, perhaps, a query from readers who have examined the literature on civil liberties and found that, in the United States, there is a strong relationship between education and support for

4. Some indication of the sensitivity of these issues may be gained from the fact that, when asked in a national poll in July 1974 whether they favored the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank, 80% of the Israeli public said they did not. And when asked whether they were for or against talks with the Palestinians at Geneva, 71% said they were against.

5. Under existing Israeli legislation there is a legal basis for the police prohibiting any type of public demonstration: *Police Ordinance*, 1974, Chapter 84.

civil liberties, and who then might correctly observe that Jews, as a group, enjoy a high level of education. It is important to emphasize that the differences by religion are real and should not be attributed to educational status. For example, remember that 81% of the Jews favored the right of dissent on the Harris poll (1967). Compare that with 67% of all respondents who attended college and said they supported dissent. Also, it is obvious that not all Jews have attended college and that the total number of people who have attended college is much larger than the number of Jews in the United States.

We did find, in the Israeli survey, that respondents who had attended universities were more supportive of dissent and in favor of civil liberties, generally, than were respondents with less education. For example, 48% of the Israelis who had attended universities were not at all suspicious of persons who advocated establishing a Palestinian state on the West Bank, compared to 24% of the respondents who had only an 8th grade education. And 76% of those who had attended universities disapproved of police interference with public demonstration on the part of any group, as opposed to 33% of the respondents with an 8th grade education.

Writing two decades ago on the sources of liberalism among American Jews, Lawrence Fuchs observed:

Since the Jews feel and know insecurity even when they are well-to-do and powerful, they are able to empathize with others who are discriminated against and insecure. . . . One of the reasons German Jewish immigrants were drawn to the newly formed Republican Party nearly one hundred years ago was that Party's stand on the slavery issue. . . .⁶

Knowledge of extreme persecution has made Jews acutely sensitive to the persecution of others. Moreover, Jews sense that inroads in the freedom and wellbeing of others may soon be followed by onslaughts on themselves. That is one reason why they have been in the forefront of civil liberties movements, and why their reaction to McCarthyism has been distinctly negative. It is difficult to imagine a large body of Catholic and Protestant clergymen representing *well-to-do* congregations *unanimously* passing a resolution denouncing Senator McCarthy and urging that his committee chairmanships be taken from him. Yet, this is just what the Central Conference of American Rabbis, representing 600 Reform Rabbis in every section of the country, did in June 1954. The Rabbis also denounced the use of the term "fifth amendment communists" and protested the use of loyalty oaths.⁷

Perhaps the Israeli Jews are still reacting to the persecution that they experienced for centuries in the ghettos of central and eastern Europe and in the mellas of Casablanca, Algiers and other cities in North Africa and the Middle East, and that it will take one or two more generations

6. Lawrence Fuchs, "Source of Jewish Internationalism and Liberalism" in Marshall Sklare, ed., *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group*, (New York, 1958) p. 597.

7. In 1954, a Gallup Poll showed that 65% of American Jews disapproved of the activities of Senator Joseph McCarthy, as compared to 31% of Protestants, 38% of Democrats, and 45% of all college graduates.

before their need to identify with the victim, or the underdog, will have been satiated. Then, the logic follows, when they will be asked about civil liberties and the right to dissent, they will respond as do most other people who live in democratic societies but who do not have constitutional provisions that explicitly protect minorities and dissidents from arbitrary restrictions and punishment. Some evidence which suggests that this development might not take place, or that it will take a much longer time, is gleaned from the data on the Israeli survey which shows that native born Israelis are no less supportive of civil liberties than are Jews who emigrated from Europe or North Africa. For example, 45 and 50% of the native born Israelis were not at all suspicious of persons who favored direct talks with the PLO or the establishment of the Palestinian state on the West Bank, as compared to 38 and 35% of the foreign born Israelis.⁸

We conclude with the comment that much more data needs to be collected and analyzed before one can make any definite determination concerning the extent to which the pro-civil liberty, pro-civil rights responses of American Jews are derived from their religious teachings and traditions, and the extent to which they are a function of their fears and projections about their own minority status. But the fact that Israeli Jews, more than 25 years after the establishment of statehood, and when they are still surrounded by hostile neighbors and when external dangers loom high, respond so favorably to matters involving individual civil liberties and tolerance for politically deviant views, at least suggests that minority status and self interest factors do not, alone, explain the consistent responses of American Jews.

8. The foreign born who came from Europe and North America were less suspicious than those who came from North Africa and the Middle East. This difference is largely a function of education.

The Israelites in Pharaoh's Egypt— A Historical Reconstruction

W. GUNTHER PLAUT

BACK IN THE EARLY 1930s, THERE APPEARED a little volume by Valerio Marcu that made an indelible impression on me and on many others in Germany who, at that time, managed to exist under Nazi rule. Every word in Marcu's book, which dealt with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, became to us a paradigm of our fate: the author wrote about the past, while we read it as a story of the present.

It was natural, therefore, to think of Marcu's book when I received an invitation to participate in the Jewish cultural symposium scheduled for late December, 1976, in Moscow. As is well known, the Soviet Government forbade the conference and denied visas to the participants from abroad. Thus, history repeats itself, and the paper that I planned to read, on the Egyptian bondage, becomes a paradigm of the oppression of Russian Jewry.

I

More has been written about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt than perhaps about any other single event in history. The bias with which 19th century scholars came to that period—and, indeed, everything that pertained to Israel as a people—has been largely discarded by modern scholars who recognize that the core of the Biblical account does represent a faithful re-creation of actual events seen from the perspective of later ages. Of course, the Bible had a distinct focus: its purpose was to show us the Exodus and God's role in it. It did not mean to give us a general history of Egypt, nor did it attempt to describe the long years of Israel's servitude. In both respects we are given the merest hints and suggestions, and if we are interested in a social and psychological reconstruction of the circumstances which preceded the Exodus we have to rely on extra-Biblical data: the available sources of Egyptian history (of which there are many); the Biblical text itself, seen in the light of contemporary scholarship; and, finally, the living memory of the generations which followed the Exodus. This latter source is frequently undervalued. What can the Midrash, for instance, tell us about the history of an age more than a thousand years earlier? Yet we must not forget that in Biblical days—as well as much

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later—only the fewest could read; important knowledge was transmitted orally, and with astounding accuracy. Often such transmission was safer than a written document, for documents were subject to destruction by accident or by the design of kings and rulers who did not like what they read. In such cases, they had little hesitation in re-writing history, not as it actually happened but as they wanted it to be recorded.

Egyptian history prior to the Exodus is a case in point. The revolution of Akhenaton produced a wide-scale destruction of pre-revolutionary records and monuments, and the counter-revolution which followed it visited a similar fate on the monuments of the rebel king.¹ Two other famous examples belong to much later periods and feature the re-writing and careful destruction of existing records. One was the post-mortem assassination of the character of Richard III of England by the Tudors; the other, the almost successful erasure of the memory of the magnificent culture of the Chimú, whose conquerors, the Inca, portrayed themselves as the builders of that civilization. For many centuries these contributions to humanity were successfully buried by the falsifiers. But complete success evaded the suppressors of truth, and today the Chimú and Richard III have been, or are being, restored to their rightful places. Somewhere, somehow, memories survive—and if they do not survive in written form, they may survive in archeological evidence or in folk memory. All of these together must be utilized by the scholar, and no possible evidence should be rejected merely because it was not contemporaneous with the events. Thus, as we shall see, Israelite folk memory—though recorded very much later in the Midrash—can help to provide us with valuable insights into the subject under consideration.

II

We know a great deal about ancient Egypt. Written records and archeological evidence abound. We know about its economy, about its privileged nobility and priesthood, as well as about the underprivileged classes: the proletariat and the serfs. About the latter classes André Neher writes:

First of all there was what historians call the Egyptian proletariat. Here they are using a very modern term to designate a social group which actually existed under the nineteenth and twentieth dynasty in Egypt, showing the identical characteristics of their nineteenth or twentieth-century European counterparts. Those who belonged to this class were destitute of everything except their hunger: "We are putrefying with hunger." That is the only language possible to describe the utter misery under Pharaohs bearing the name of Rameses. These words recur like a leitmotiv, like an obsession on the lips of the proletariat who have nothing else, or almost nothing else to say.

1. Alan Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 228, 236-237.

Yet there were people in Egypt (whose) misery surpasses even that of the proletariat. If the proletariat remains within certain limits these are overstepped the moment we approach the serfs. Of the slaves, the Egyptian says: "They have no hearts," and here, as everywhere else in the orient, the heart signifies the personality itself. This discovery, which is as positive as a law of physics, authorizes him to treat the serf like an inanimate object.

These slaves constitute one densely packed mass of humanity. In Egypt the proletariat is numerous. However, in their drawings there are spaces around the peasants and workmen who, in spite of their numbers, seem to retain a minimum of individuality. On the other hand, the scenes depicting slavery and forced labour are brutal in their massiveness. Human beings are so closely packed and piled upon each other that they appear as a single whole, yoked as such to its work, without any individuality at all.

These human masses are the victims of the totalitarian empire of the Rameses and their passionate and fanatical cult of power. The State and its prestige demand the systematic construction of colossal depots, fortresses, palaces, temples, cities and tombs. The slaves provide the gratuitous and inexhaustible pool of labour for this immense task.²

The upper classes, headed by the court and the pharaoh, ruled with absolute power, buttressed by a thought system which laid claim to ultimate truth. The king spoke with divine authority against which there was no appeal. Even Akhenaton, whose religious revolution brought Egypt close to a form of monotheism, exhorted his servants to observe his instructions by calling it "my doctrine."³

The Biblical tradition was well aware of this hierarchy of power and it concentrated its attention on the two chief protagonists: the god of the Egyptians and the God of the Hebrews, who was represented by Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh was the human authority who ruled one of the two great powers of antiquity; he had the total resources of his empire at his command; and he could—and did—order death and bitter deprivation for the rebellious Israelites. Their resources were spiritual, and they believed that spiritual power could overcome the overwhelming pressures of the state. And they succeeded, or rather, God succeeded. At first, the demands of the Israelites were modest: give us leave to worship God in accordance with our needs and His will (Exodus 5:1 ff.). When Pharaoh refused, the demands were expanded and permanent emigration became the issue. "Let My people go that they may worship me" was the new request made of Pharaoh (Exodus 9:1) and, as expected, he refused again. He did not want to lose his serfs; besides, if they went, others, too, might want to escape from servitude—which was precisely what took place later on when Israel's exodus occurred. We read that, with the Israelites, a group called *erev rav* went out, probably a mass of disadvantaged people, proletarians who had no economic future, and assorted serfs (Exodus

2. André Ncher, *Moses* (New York-London, 1959), pp. 69 ff. (excerpts).

3. Gardiner, *Op. cit.*, p. 224.

12:38). Pharaoh and his nobility were in the grip of their own economic system, built on exploiting cheap labor, and of their intellectual and spiritual system which declared its own viewpoint to be divine and, therefore, infallible. The Bible, giving Pharaoh's attitude a theological name, says that "God stiffened Pharaoh's heart," which the Midrash interpreted to mean: Pharaoh had committed himself to oppression to such a degree that oppression became his way of government. Even so slight a request as the one that Moses made at first—a temporary release for the duration of three days—was considered an intolerable breach of the system—and how much more so when the Israelites requested permission for a permanent exodus. It was tantamount to drawing the whole Pharaonic world view into question. Hence, the repeated notation that while the king wavered in the face of various catastrophes—economic and otherwise—and was ready to make minor concessions (like giving the labor force a brief holiday but keeping the women and children as hostages), the final answer was always "No." He would not let the Israelites go freely as they had requested. The Pharaonic system made prisoners, not only of the slaves, but of their masters as well.

III

While the Egyptian political and psychological system can be pictured with a fair degree of certainty, this is not the case when it comes to the Israelites. For instance, we are not sure precisely who were the Israelites who were in Egyptian servitude. Most certainly they were not the whole people described by the Bible as the family of Jacob. Some of the tribes apparently never left Canaan and some others seem to have left before the time of the Exodus. Thus, the Midrash tells us that thousands of Ephraimites had escaped from Egypt at an earlier time but had been killed by Pharaoh's army.⁴

Nor can we overlook the point that Joseph, who had brought his family down to Egypt in the first place, is unlikely to have lived 400 years prior to Moses' time, as the Bible records. The figure "400" is of Egyptian origin; it played a role in the famous stele of Pharaoh Rameses II (1304–1237) and is a schematic or symbolic one. The figure 40 stood for "generation," and 10x40 meant "many generations" or "a very long time." Therefore, Israel's oppression in Egypt dated back "a very long time"—long enough to exceed the memory of anyone alive.⁵ Perhaps the Israelites had come with the Hyksos invaders or had been brought in by them later on to guard the sensitive border province of Goshen. When the Hyksos were displaced the Hebrews were de-classified and their long servitude began.

4. *Targum Jonathan* on Exodus 13:17.

5. In the same way, the figure 318, which appears in Genesis 14:14, comes from Mari culture and indicated that Abraham took with him "everything he had."

A number of questions arise—and on all of these the Biblical text is silent.

Thus, we are not told how, under oppressive conditions, the Israelites were able to keep their identity alive and vital. The pressures of assimilating to Egyptians culture and thought must have been overwhelming. The history of human oppression shows that those who are degraded are likely to find their masters' civilization to be superior—why else would the masters rule? What, then, made it possible for the Hebrews to resist this pressure? Remnants of religious feeling? Traditions handed on by one generation to the next? Perhaps. The Bible says nothing, but the Midrash preserves a folk memory of ancient times. It says that three practices saved the Hebrew culture from extinction: the people practised chastity; they did not forget their national tongue; and they received Hebrew names.⁶ “Chastity” meant a sense of traditional purity, an intense family loyalty which caused parents to transmit to their children values which, on occasion, may have opposed the values of the ruling class.

The transmission of the love of the Hebrew language was another important factor in the struggle for identity. Such a struggle was to be repeated in many centuries of later Diaspora: when people learned and studied Hebrew they kept alive their bonds with the past and with their contemporaries elsewhere and, especially, in the Promised Land, whenever there was a strong Jewish community living there. Hebrew was the key to understanding basic oral traditions, as well as written records which assumed a sacred place only when preserved in the national language.

And, finally, names. They were then, and were often afterwards, the sign that the Israelites remained proud to be who they were. For public appearances and political purposes Joseph assumed the name of Zaphenat-paneah, but privately he remained Joseph—“I am Joseph,” he says to his family (Genesis 45:3), and the Midrash adds that when he spoke to his brothers he spoke to them in Hebrew to convince them that he was authentic.⁷

To be sure, there was a time when he had tried to forget his past and his family, which explains why he never tried to get in touch with them. He had joined the ruling class and served them well, but he never could fully obliterate his identity. We may be certain that, behind his back, the Egyptians talked about his Hebrew origin, and he himself never succeeded in suppressing it fully. The visit of his brothers wiped away the veneer, and toward the end of his life he made his family promise that when, at last he would die, they would return his bones to his homeland.

6. Various sources are cited by Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, (Philadelphia, 1955), vol V, p. 413 f., note 106.

7. See Rashi on Genesis 45:12.

IV

The homeland—doubtless the thought of it was kept alive among the people throughout their sojourn in Egypt. Some day they would return to Canaan, to the place where the ancestors were buried, where the vision of God in its pure sense was first beheld and treasured. The memory was idealized, and Canaan was thought of as the land where all human problems were solved, where the soil was rich and yielded more than enough for all of its inhabitants, and where animals could find nourishment without fear of drought or overgrazing. Memory often works like that: it emphasizes the best and most desirable and covers what interferes with hope. Why worry about hard work or crop failures in Canaan when one still lived in Egypt? So the Israelites focussed—quite properly—on the most important aspect of the homeland: it represented freedom, the ability to shape life in accordance with the people's own sense of identity. It would be good simply because it spelled liberty. The material details were, no doubt, exaggerated by those who kept alive the dream of return, but the essentials were right.

Of course, not everyone is likely to have thought in the same way. There must have been the “realists” who pointed out the difficulties of crossing the desert, the delays that might occur, the enemies whom one might meet on the way. Would the Israelites be welcomed once they reached Canaan? Would things not be hard, rather than easy? Could the skills one had acquired in Egypt be used in the new land? Perhaps the period of migration and settlement would entail wars and hardships—would it not be better to stay where one was? There was enough to eat in Egypt and, while work was hard, one knew exactly what was required. That is precisely how, later on, some of the malcontents spoke: “We remember the fish we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic” (Numbers 11:5). The news of their discontent must have reached those who never left Egypt, and their taskmasters, hearing the same news, must have gloated and said: “We told you so.”

For there were Hebrews in Egypt who never gave up their servitude. In fact, if we can trust folk memory, only a brave and adventurous minority left, while the majority stayed behind and made the best of their condition. Again it is the Midrash which has preserved this tradition. It comments on the phrase which states that the Israelites left Egypt *hamushim* (Exodus 13:18). Generally, this is understood to mean either that they left with enough provisions or that they were armed. But one tradition says that it meant that only “a fiftieth” left the country (relating the word to *hamesh*, “five.”⁸

This tradition can also offer an explanation to the most puzzling of all

8. *Mekhilta Beshallah* 1.

the questions surrounding the period of Israel's stay in Egypt: Why did God decide suddenly that the time had come for Israel's liberation? Was it just divine caprice or had certain conditions developed which made liberation an urgent item on God's agenda? The Bible itself is silent, noting only that Israel's bitter cries were heard by God (Exodus 2:23-25), but nothing further is said. The speculation which the Midrash puts forth on this matter is, however, worth recording. In commenting on the phrase (6:9) that the Israelites were incapable of hearing the message of liberation, it says that they could not let go of the idolatries of Egypt—that is, the Egyptian thought-system had accustomed them to oppression, so that, having made the requisite adjustments, they were prepared to live with it.⁹ When that happened, God knew that the need for liberation was urgent and He intervened to bring it about, through the agency of Moses and Aaron.

Their task was not an easy one. They told the people that God would help them to leave the country, "But they did not listen because they had no vision and because of their hard labor" (Exodus 6:10). The Egyptian system had succeeded: it had reduced a proud people to willing serfs, cogs in the machine of the state, a nation whose will power had eroded. Only the best—one fiftieth, according to the tradition noted above—prized themselves loose from their fetters. They decided to believe in the message of freedom and risked everything they had in the pursuit of selfhood and identity. The homeland beckoned and so did their brothers who lived there.

Eventually, the Egyptian rulers decided to let them go, and when, later, they changed their minds again, they met with catastrophe. It is idle to speculate on what would have happened if Pharaoh had yielded at once to Moses' request—perhaps his kingdom would have been spared the severe jolts that it suffered during the period of the plagues (as they have become known) and later at the Red Sea. It is idle, because history does not go back and try again; it is one-directional. One thing is clear from this reconstruction of the background to the Biblical Exodus: the Egyptian system was brittle because of its very rigidity, and it came to grief in its struggle with a people bent on freedom—a struggle for which, at that time, there was no precedent.

9. *Mekhilta Pisha* 5.

Democratic Elitism: The Ideological Framework of Jewish Community

MORDECAI ROSHWALD

"... would God that all
the Lord's people were
prophets" (Num. 11:29).

I

THE THESIS THAT DEMOCRATIC ELITISM is the peculiar belief, attitude or ideology that animated the Jewish community from its early foundation to the present day, has to be defined in the context of, and with reference to, various other community ideologies. Only such a comparative setting will enable us to stress the distinctive nature of the Israelite-Judaic-Jewish-Israeli notion (if one may coin such a phrase).

One fundamental view of society, notably political society, asserts that it should be ruled, for its own good, by the few who are best qualified for the task. This is aristocracy, the rule of the best, in the literal and original sense of the word. The doctrine was expounded in Plato's *Republic*, in which he made the following famous statement:

Unless either philosophers become kings in their countries or those who are now kings and rulers come to be sufficiently inspired with a genuine desire for wisdom; unless, that is to say, political power and philosophy meet together, while the many natures who now go their several ways . . . are forcibly debarred from doing so, there can be no rest from troubles . . . for states, nor yet . . . for all mankind.¹

This assertion enthrones some and places them in the seat of power, while it deliberately and emphatically excludes others, obviously more numerous ("the many natures"), from political powers. The Platonic claim for aristocratic rule is made in the name of true wisdom, to which only few have access, but the argument for the rule of the few, allegedly best, has also been made on other grounds, such as experience, leisure, wealth, education, inspiration. The distinctive mark of the aristocratic—we may call it "elitist"—approach is the assumption that some, and few, are best suited to control and lead the entire society, while the majority are best advised to obey the authority of those few.

Another ideology, much more in fashion today, implicitly denies the

1. *Republic*, Book V, 473, Cornford translation (Oxford University Press), pp. 178-179.

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superior political wisdom of the few, or remains indifferent to it. It focuses its concern not on the ultimate benefits of the regime, but on the initial legitimacy of political authority which can be established only and solely on the free consent of the people. In the phrasing of John Locke, "Men being . . . by nature all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of his estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent. . . ."² The same sentiment is expressed with even greater vigour by Jean-Jacques Rousseau: "Since no man has natural authority over his fellows, and since Might can produce no Right, the only foundation left for legitimate authority in human societies is Agreement."³ We need not concern ourselves here with how such an agreement is achieved; there are important differences between Locke and Rousseau, as well as between their practical disciples, in this respect. What matters to us here is the general principle that the people, the entire people, are the source of any legitimate political authority. The right government, the good society, must be, in the fundamental sense, democratic.

Representative democracy, whichever form it takes in the modern world, implicitly and deliberately combines the two aforementioned ideologies. While it is based on the principle of the sovereignty of the people and the legitimation of government by the consent of the voting citizens, it also assumes that some are better suited to govern than others, that the few elected are, it is hoped, also the few elect. James Madison, speaking of a republic, by which he meant "a government in which the scheme of representation takes place," sees in such a system some distinctive advantages. The representative, selective principle is a means

to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country . . . Under such a regulation, it may well happen that the public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves, convened for the purpose.⁴

Obviously, the representatives are expected to be not merely the spokesmen of the people, their microphones as it were, but the distillers and improvers of *vox populi*, better suited to decide what is good *for* the people than are the people themselves. Still, the people remain both the source of the authority of the representative government and the object of its concern.

This mixture of the democratic and the aristocratic elements in the philosophy of representative democracy, a point often forgotten nowadays by both the people and their elected rulers, is foreshadowed in the

2. *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, Chap. VIII, Sec. 95.

3. *The Social Contract*, Book I, Chap. IV.

4. *The Federalist*, No. X.

Politics of Aristotle, who makes his point with characteristic intellectual clarity, though hidden behind some, no less typical, textual difficulties. In the setting of ancient Greece, where democracy meant *direct* rule by the people, the Aristotelian precursor of our representative democracy is a "mixed government," in which the democratic and the oligarchic principles are blended and co-ordinated. Thus, to give Aristotle's own illustration, people would be elected to office (rather than democratically appointed by lot), but no property qualification would be required of them (as was the oligarchic practice).⁵ As to the democratic element, "the many, of whom each individual is but an ordinary person, when they meet together may very likely be better than the few good, if regarded not individually but collectively . . ."⁶ Yet, the trust in the many, who do not usually have the distinction of merit or wealth of the few, is limited: "There is still a danger in allowing them to share the great offices of state, for their folly will lead them into error, and their dishonesty into crime."⁷ Still, to exclude them from office is dangerous as well, for it will make them enemies of the state—or alienated from society, as we would put it. Hence the compromise solution: a synthesis of political power of the many free and poor with the few of the better class where supreme political virtue is likely to be found. Ideally, the latter will be the holders of important offices, elected by the former whose collective wisdom has merit and whose involvement in politics is important for social cohesion. Thus, an equilibrium of merit and a balance of power will be secured and maintained in the structure of political authority.

II

Each of the three ideological elements enumerated above can be found in the Judaic notion of community, though each of them is expressed in a special and distinctive manner due to the peculiarity of the Judaic *Weltanschauung*. This does not mean that Jewish scholars and philosophers borrowed the various notions from Greek antiquity, let alone from modern politics, and ingeniously devised a syncretistic political ideology for the peculiar people. The Judaic notions, in this respect, are already vigorously expressed in the Bible, even if some of their aspects may be rooted in immemorial, possibly pre-Israelite, tribal institutions.

To start with the democratic principle: there is textual evidence in the Bible for the notion that the consent of the people is the foundation for the establishment of a new regime, though not necessarily of a new ruler. The prominent case is, of course, the compact between the twelve tribes of Israel and God Himself, concluded in the wilderness of Sinai, by means of which they became a chosen people—"a peculiar treasure unto me above all people" (Exodus 19:5). The divine choice is not imposed on the

5. Aristotle, *Politics*, Jowett translation, Book IV, Chap. 9. 1294b.

6. Ibid., Book III, Chap. 11. 1281a-1281b.

7. Ibid., 1281b.

children of Israel, but is offered to them, and it becomes binding only after their acceptance—"All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8). Similarly, the establishment of kingship in Israel is a response to popular demand. The Lord—and certainly Samuel—is not happy about it, but, after some stern warnings about the disadvantages and risks involved in human monarchy, the will of the people is to be fulfilled: "And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king" (I Samuel 8:22).

While the people's consent is required for the establishment of a new regime, of a novel order for the community, and while the people's will may initiate a new system of government, popular opinion is not consulted at fixed intervals, as is the established practice of democracy. In the Bible, the people's consent is conceived as a historical decision, binding on future generations, and not as a continuous, flexible, and changing voice of the governed. The consent is not merely an expression of will—still less of a wish or a whim; it is also a commitment, a moral obligation, which is binding on the nation in the future. The nation is conceived here as a collective entity with a long, perhaps eternal, life of its own, and not as an assembly of short-lived individuals. The national commitment is especially binding and becomes absolute when the agreement is made with God, that is to say, when theocracy, the rule of God, is the regime that is being established. Indeed, it is the theocratic idea which decisively affects the democratic principle. For if God is omnipotent and His laws are just, there is no place for the people, or for anyone else, to change His commandments, nor does their perfection diminish with the passage of time. Facing the absolute Right, the people must not change it or modify it; they can only follow it. If so, it can be asked, why the need for the democratic consent to divine rule in the first place? The answer is that the religiously and morally right way is not to be imposed on a free people, but must result from its own choice, from its voluntary commitment.

The rule of the best, the aristocratic principle, as well as the monarchic institution, are also controlled by the theocratic ideal in Israel and in Judaism. The judges were raised by the Lord and the kings were anointed by the prophets on God's command. The prophets themselves, a spiritual-moral elite, spoke in the name of the Lord. Later on, during the era of the Second Temple, the Sanhedrin, the highest judicial body, 71 men, exercised its authority as the interpreter and the applier of the divine Law to diverse legal cases. The subsequent generations of Rabbinical scholars and community leaders—whether in Judea or Babylonia, whether in Spain, Germany or Eastern Europe—considered themselves as strictly bound by the established legal tradition originating in divine pronouncements. Thus, though the "best," conceived in one institutional form or another, judged, ruled, guided, adjudicated, they always did so in the name of divine authority. The aristocratic rule, the power of the elite, was subject to theocracy, the governance of God.

What we have said so far would lead to the conclusion that the

political notions of ancient Israel and of Judaism could be summarized under the broad formula of a "mixed government." But such a conclusion would have to be amplified by stating that the mixture would be somewhat more complex than the ones suggested by Aristotle or followed by modern representative democracy. For, instead of a dual combination of a general will, or people's consent, with the authority of the few—and, it is hoped, best—chosen by the people, the Judaic notion introduces a triangular combination: the people, the elite, and God. The relationship among the three parties is peculiar. It is the people who have to consent to the rule of God—in this sense they are sovereign—but the consent is binding on future generations; it is a democratic but definitive act of accepting divine authority. The elite—and its nature changes through the ages—may be instituted by popular will (as in the establishment of kingship, or even the change of dynasties), or in some other manner such as co-option (Rabbis), but its authority is derived from divine sanction or from adherence to, and knowledge of, divine law. Thus, God remains both the supreme ruler and an essential link in the relationship between the elite and the people.

III

Yet, this analysis does not convey all of the essential meaning and peculiarity of the Judaic notion of "mixed government." It does not indicate the nature of the relationship between the elite and the people—not only in the political sense, but, also, and primarily, in the social sense. Are the few earthly holders of authority a stable class who are counterpoised by the many, as in the Aristotelian formula? Is political and social stability in Judaism achieved by a rather stable and static equilibrium between the many and the few, as seems to be the prescription of the peripatetic philosopher? The answer to these questions is no. The Jews, ever since their wanderings in the desert, adopted a dynamic view of class relationship, the actual or potential social change and progress being informed and illuminated by the theocratic principle. This point requires some additional illumination.

The key to the understanding of the issue is the famous pronouncement, attributed to God: "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). The idea here is that the entire house of Jacob, all the tribes of Israel, the people as a whole, will attain spiritual-moral perfection, will be the true elite, the best, the genuine aristocrats. There seems no need, or place, in this expectation, for a differentiation within the kingdom of priests, or the holy nation. Abiding by the commandments of the Lord, true acceptance of God's rule, lifts up the *entire* nation into the special, choice position: "Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people"["all peoples"—to be more faithful to the Hebrew text] (Exodus 19:5).

Nor can these pronouncements be belittled as general, but not pre-

cisely meant, statements, for they are corroborated by a story which admirably and emphatically conveys the ideal of the attainment of perfection by the entire people, an ideal which might be called "democratic elitism." When the Lord took of the spirit of Moses and gave it unto the seventy elders, and two of them, Eldad and Medad, apparently improperly started to prophesy in the camp, Joshua, in his indignation, asks Moses to "forbid them." The response of Moses is monumental: "Enviest thou for my sake? would God that [more exactly: "oh, that"] all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29).

The meaning and message of the story are quite clear. While, in reality, some people are better suited than others to hold leading positions in society and, therefore, it is advisable for the many to submit to the judgment and leadership of the few, it would have been better if the many—indeed, all the people—could attain the spiritual qualities required for being "the best" and, thus, the whole nation, the entire community, would become an elite, "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." Nor is such a possibility ruled out, on the assumption that the actual inequality of human beings is unavoidable and that humanity must always—if you will allow an academic metaphor—be graded on a statistical curve. The possibility that the Lord "would put his spirit" on "all the Lord's people" is not excluded. One might even suggest that it remains a distinct hope of Moses, when he refers to the people as "the Lord's people" who are, therefore, particularly suited to carry the spirit of the Lord. Even from the point of view of the leader, his own elevated position does not justify the belittling of the masses, looking down on them, while nurturing a sense of his own superiority. Thus, "the man Moses was very meek" (Numbers 12:3), and the king of Israel is exhorted, as a matter of principle and routine, to study and observe the teaching and the law of God, "That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren" (Deuteronomy 17:20). The leaders must be humble, while the people may aspire to attain the levels of perfection of those leaders.

It is the idea of a perfectability that is open to all which introduces the dynamic element into the Judaic notion of community, and which, as already indicated, is absent in the Aristotelian formula of "mixed government." For the Judaic notion, while accepting the actual mixture of the elite and the people in social reality, poses the potential equality as an ideal to be striven for. This equality, however, must not be attained by lowering the standards of perfection, by effecting a compromise between the best and the mediocre. Nothing could be further from the Judaic idea! The equality can be attained only on the level of perfection, the level of the absolute truth and right being dictated by God Himself, the ultimate ruler and law giver. All of the people can try to be prophets, but the quality of prophecy must not suffer by this attempt. The aspiration may be democratic, but the level must remain that of the true elite. The idea that the

voice of the people is the voice of God—*vox populi vox Dei*—is alien to Judaism. It is the other way round—*vox Dei vox populi*. The commandments and teaching of God remain the immutable standard for the people—the entire people—who ought to try to reach perfection.

The idea of the upward movement of people of humble circumstances, occasionally combined with the notion of humility of the actual elite, persists in the Israelite and Judaic perception of community and its social relations and structure. Thus, Jacob, the second born, buys Esau's birthright (Genesis 25). The same Jacob, when blessing Joseph's sons, prefers the younger Ephraim over the firstborn Manasseh (Genesis 48). Saul, the Benjamite, who is humbly aware of being "of the smallest of the tribes of Israel" and of his family being "the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin" (I Samuel 9:21), is made the first king of Israel. David, the youngest son of Jesse (I Samuel 17:14)—in fact, he is scolded by his eldest brother for neglecting the sheep to watch a battle (v. 28)—becomes a king and a founder of a dynasty. The prophets of Israel, the spiritual and moral leaders whose role in the social and political life of their times and whose stature in the Bible and impact on the religious development of Judaism have been invaluable, achieve their position neither through social status nor through political leverage. They are, as a rule, introduced as anonymous individuals whose outstanding role is due to divine inspiration. They *may* include a man of the highest social stratum like Isaiah, but they also include a simple herdsman like Amos. In short, their origin is irrelevant; only the inherent excellence matters.

A fundamental way to spiritual and moral improvement was the study of the teaching and laws of God. It was open to all and, from the earliest days of Israelite history, an insistence on general participation in it was prominent. Moses exhorts the people, "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children" (Deuteronomy 6:7). While we do not know what institutional form this exhortation may have taken in the initial periods of Israelite history, there is evidence of the establishment of general and virtually compulsory education in the first century C.E., if not earlier. Thus, Josephus Flavius writes: "Our principal care of all is this to educate our children well."⁸ He elaborates on the scope and aim of education, when he states that the law "commands us to bring those children up in learning, and to exercise them in the laws, and make them acquainted with the acts of their predecessors . . ."⁹ The firm establishment of general education is attributed to Joshua ben Gamala, a High Priest in the first century C.E., who "ordained that teachers of young children should be appointed in each district and each town, and that children should enter school at the age of six or seven."¹⁰ Throughout the following millenia, the education of children, whether of rich or poor

8. *Against Apion*, 12.

9. *Ibid.*, 26.

10. *Baba Batra* 21a.

families, persisted as a fundamental institution of Jewish communities, wherever they happened to be established. Generally, it assured the minimum of reading and understanding the Torah and the fundamental laws of Judaism, and it provided the general foundation for the continued pursuit of sacred knowledge.

It is the further advancement in these studies that paves the way to excellence. Total devotion and life-long consecration to the study of the Torah—Torah meaning here the Biblical teaching of God and the amplification of Rabbinical commentaries and oral traditions of divine origin—is the approved and cherished way-of-life. There are countless sayings in the Talmudic and Midrashic literature extolling and glorifying the Torah and its study. Indeed, such devoted study became the focus of Jewish culture through the ages—both as a matter of deliberate choice and as a result of circumstances which precluded political institutions and which limited the range of social activity. This consecration, while the attainment of the few, the elite, was open to all. And anyone attaining prominence in the study of Torah would become a member of that elite. The concept of *talmid ḥakham*, a scholar versed in Rabbinical studies, became tantamount to a man of distinction and, as late as a few generations ago, wealthy Jews in Eastern Europe would look for Talmudic scholars as the best matches for their daughters. Learning in the traditional sacred books was both a way to individual perfection and to a rise in social status. It was, of course, natural for a theocratic community to view the knowledge of the divinely inspired law as the mark of aristocracy. Though well-to-do parents may have often been helpful in enabling their sons to pursue sacred studies on a higher level, there is plenty of evidence of poor, but gifted, boys and young men pursuing this path with great success. Among the early sages, such famous names as Hillel and Rabbi Akibah come to mind—the first one studying in conditions of dire poverty and the other reputed to have been originally an ignorant herdsman. The Talmud enjoins us to “be heedful [not to neglect] the children of the poor, for from them Torah goeth forth.”¹¹ In modern Hebrew literature, H.N. Bialik built a monument to the poor devoted rabbinical scholar in his poem “*Hamatmid*” (translated as “The Talmud Student”), while S.Y. Agnon’s Reb Yudel, the protagonist in *The Bridal Canopy*, is another literary testimony to the total commitment of the poor to learning. In brief, the way to the top, to the spiritual perfection which is also reflected in social distinction, is open to all and is actually trodden by many of the meek and poor.

Significantly, this notion of democratic elitism, of everyone being considered as a possible paragon, not only persisted, but underwent a vigorous revival in the Hasidic movement, which regarded piety of heart as more important than learning, the ardent devotion to God of a simple

11. *Nedarim* 81a.

man as intrinsically superior to the knowledge of a scholar. The obvious implication of such a belief was that the way to excellence—communion with God might be a more adequate description of the goal—is attainable by ordinary people. It is the purity of the heart, the strength of belief and the ardour of prayer which elevate the Jew from ordinary life to the highest spheres of religious reality. This conviction is underscored by various pronouncements of Hasidic rabbis and in Hasidic tales. Thus, the Rabbi of Rimanov is reputed to have said that the evening prayer of the poor and ignorant peddler, rushing to the House of Prayer despite fatigue and hunger, “splits the very Heavens.”¹² Another well-known story tells of the ignorant herdsman who blew his whistle at the *Neilah* prayer on Yom Kippur in a genuine intent to serve God as best he knew. On hearing it, the Ba'al Shem Tov (the founder of Hasidism) announced that God had responded and opened the gates of heaven in answer to the whistle, while the prayers and learning of the rabbis had been of no avail.¹³ The dynamic process of the simple man, reaching for the highest levels of existence, is here given a new expression, an expression adequately conveyed in spiritual-religious terms, though not without social overtones. To be sure, Hasidism is aware of the fact that, in reality, the highest levels are reached by only very few—the inspired Hasidic rabbis. However, it is their task actively to help the masses, to bring them closer to God—to help the masses become the elite (to put it in our terms.).

While some of the people could achieve prominence permanently through learning or piety, all could gain distinction on some occasions. Indeed, institutional ways were established to allow the common people to reach spiritual perfection, and, thereby, also a high social status (be it for a passing hour). Democratic elitism was made easy—even if in a limited sense. Let me explicate. When a Jew prays, or when he recites a blessing, he does so in the accepted and prescribed manner, irrespective of his wealth, status, wisdom, or learning. He addresses God directly, without intermediaries, in the holy language, using the accepted formula or text. In other words, at the moment of prayer and blessing everyone is equally close to the Almighty, the entire community—whether collectively or individually—becomes, as it were, “a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.” Such moments, indeed hours, have been part and parcel of daily Jewish life—not only in the synagogue, but, also, at home. In the eloquent phrasing of Israel Zangwill, “religion threw its cheerful sanctification over every meal and made every home a temple,”¹⁴ with the father of the family, one might add, officiating as the high priest. This would be especially notable on the Sabbath and the various holidays, for while the quality and quantity of food may have varied according to the material

12. See Louis I. Newman, *The Hasidic Anthology* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1944), p. 501.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 520.

14. *Speeches, Articles and Letters* (London: Soncino Press, 1937), p. 19.

circumstances of the family, the ceremonial aspect remained identical. That is what made every Jew a king on the Sabbath. That is what made every Jew feel free and elated on his feather-cushioned seat at the Passover Seder. And the community made sure that everyone could feel that way by the institution of *maot hittim*, a financial support for the poor, to allow them to acquire the necessary foods for Passover.

These and similar practical concerns for the economically underprivileged were bolstered by a philosophy of the significance of each member of the community, the value of his life and the assurance of his eternal bliss. Thus, a Mishnah asserts that "whosoever preserves a single soul of Israel, Scripture ascribes [merit] to him as though he had preserved a complete world."¹⁵ Another Mishnah states: "All Israel have a portion in the world to come, for it is written, 'The people are all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever . . .'"¹⁶ (Some are excluded, but only for serious transgressions.) Such a fundamental assertion of the equal importance and destiny of every individual expresses the fundamental democratic stand of Judaism, while also indicating the high value of each individual—a member of a "kingdom of priests," of a people who "are all righteous." The point is made in a rather blunt manner in another statement: "All Israel are royal children."¹⁷

IV

Democratic elitism in Judaism can also be detected in modern times. While this ideology was developed and honed within the traditional national-religious civilization, it has survived into the era of secularized, or semi-secularized, Jewish life, to express itself in a variety of ways.

An interesting example can be found in a short essay by I.L. Peretz entitled "Hope and Fear," written in 1906.¹⁸ The fact that the following ideas come from the pen of a central figure in Yiddish letters may justify viewing them as a significant, and perhaps even representative, expression of Jewish attitudes to modern ideologies. Peretz addresses himself to Socialism, with which he is in profound sympathy, but about which he has deep misgivings. "My heart is with you. Man must be fed. He must have light. He should be free, should be able to control his labor and himself. He should have it in his power to create." Thus, the democratic elements, expressed in Socialism, are wholeheartedly approved. Yet, fears creep in. Peretz worries about the victorious oppressed turning into oppressors, about material satiety and mental starvation. The concern for the living and thriving spirit has clear overtones of concern for, and devotion to, the pursuit of excellence, for maintaining spiritual aristocracy as the goal and

15. *Sanhedrin* 37a.

16. *Sanhedrin* 90a.

17. *Shabbat* 128a.

18. Translated by Nathan Halper in *Voices from the Yiddish*, edited by Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), pp. 22-24.

guiding-star of humanity: "Cruelly will you defend the equal rights of the herd—to grass beneath its feet. Your enemy will be the individual: the superior man, prophet, emancipator, poet, artist." Equality must not stand in the way of the true elite, for, obviously, social progress towards excellence depends on the inspiration of the exceptional few. By suppressing them society undermines its own advancement: "You will extinguish the radiance of prophecy, of dreams and new hope."

The impact of this ideal of democratic elitism can be discerned in the change in social stratification in Jewish communities which, having left the Orthodox ghetto, became emancipated and, to a degree, assimilated into the larger society. Wherever the legal and social obstructions to advancement were removed, Jews moved upward in society beyond any other ethnic or religious group. A testimony to this statement is the number—comparative and sometimes even absolute—of Jewish writers, scientists, scholars, artists, virtuosi in the United States, Great Britain, France, at one time in Germany, and even in Russia in our times. Some people attribute this prominence to the Jewish genius, whatever this may mean, some even to genetic superiority. A more plausible explanation may be provided by the Jewish ideology of democratic elitism. Even those Jews who are not familiar with the heritage of Judaism, who are removed from the Biblical and post-Biblical sources, may have imbibed the idea that everyone has the right to excel, that everyone should strive to do as best he can. The emancipation of the Jews and the new opportunities which it provided opened the gates for an outward and upward movement to the sons of poor craftsmen and of deprived peddlers who, themselves, had had no such opportunity but who retained their dreams of all the Lord's people being prophets, or Talmudic scholars—a dream translated by many of the emancipated generation into becoming doctors, scholars, scientists, artists, writers. To be sure, in the United States, and in various other developed countries, upward social mobility was general. Children of European peasants who emigrated to America achieved prominence, as did some descendants of coal miners in Britain, or of muzhiks in Russia. However, the trend among the Jews has been much more pronounced—a typical manifestation of the dynamic implications of democratic elitism.

Yet another way in which this ideology left its imprint on Jewish life can be traced in the national revival of modern Israel and in its political-social life. Here we face not individual advancement within the larger non-Jewish community, but collective elitism within the reborn national community and state, elitism in an independent socio-political setting. The phenomenon in question is that of the kibbutzim and their place in the society and state of Israel. The kibbutz is an agricultural, or agricultural-industrial, settlement, comprising a few hundred or a few thousand people who are committed to a life of close economic and social co-operation and of equality. It is a self-governing community, working through a general assembly of members and elected committees and

executive officers. Thus, it tries to combine the principles of democracy, of equality and of fraternity. It is an attempt to implement some of the modern ideologies of socialism and some of the ideals of social regeneration in a closely knit community. It is permeated with idealistic belief and its members are consciously committed and devoted to their idea of the right way-of-life.

While these facets of the kibbutz are of interest in themselves, its role in the wider society of modern Israel is of special significance for our inquiry. For it must be realized that the kibbutz does not regard itself, nor is it regarded by others, as an escapist invention, as a utopian island, as a social oddity, but as a part and parcel of the Zionist movement and of modern Israel. In the words of one student of this phenomenon,

The kibbutz sees itself . . . as the point of thrust of Jewish national rebirth and social liberation. It is to be "the chalutz"—the pioneer—"who crosses over before the host" at every critical point of national endeavor—settlement of remote and inhospitable areas, demarcation and defense of the borders, the furtherance of the Jewish and Hebrew cultural renaissance. Further, it sees itself as the most advanced element . . . of the labour movement's attempt to create an Israeli form of socialism—humanistic and democratic, ethical and constructive.¹⁹

Thus, to translate this statement into our conceptual framework, the kibbutz plays the role of the elite in more than one sense, while at the same time being firmly rooted in the democratic belief. For, like the elite of Rabbinical scholars, or of the Hasidic movement, it is open to well-intentioned, dedicated, highminded, self-effacing individuals who are welcome to join it and become a part of the aristocracy. And, like its various aristocratic predecessors in Jewish history, it is concerned with the destiny and fortunes of the nation; it tries, according to its own lights, to raise the nation to new levels of social relations and moral ideals. One might add that the internal structure of the kibbutz is emphatically democratic and egalitarian, thus adding a new trait to the character of the elite itself, namely, equality. One could say, therefore, that the kibbutz presents a case not only of democratic elitism within the national framework, but, also, of democracy within the aristocratic elite.

There is still another manifestation of democratic elitism in the life of modern Israel, a manifestation neither explored nor documented, yet quite typical. It is the attitude of ordinary people—whether educated or not, whether knowledgeable or not, whether party members or not—who discuss government policies in a self-assured and even superior manner. "If I would be the Prime Minister, I would do this and that," is the symbolical model reflecting this attitude. Not accidentally, it echoes the familiar anecdote of a poor Jew asserting that if he were Rothschild he

19. Yehuda Paz, "Social Implications of the Kibbutz," mimeographed paper delivered at International Conference on the Role of Co-operative and Public Economies in Democratic Societies. Tel-Aviv, May 22-25, 1973, p. 5.

would have been richer than Rothschild. Not surprisingly, if he were the Prime Minister, he would be a better one than the present one—whoever he be. Such an attitude reflects the notion that the ordinary Jew is not less good than the ruling elite. It is a manifestation of the ordinary people asserting themselves—not because they have rights as the source of political power, but because they believe they excel in political acumen, because they consider themselves as qualified for leadership. In the deeper consciousness of the Jews the right to rule is derived not so much from the consent of the people, as from the excellence of the ruler; but, then, the many consider themselves to be as good as the few whom they have chosen. It is the prophets, the scholars, the inspired, who should lead, but many assume that all of the Lord's people are, if not prophets, then clever statesmen. While in western democracies, notably in the United States, political leaders try to be attuned to the common people, in Israel the people are attuned to the position of leaders. Instead of democratization of the elite, we witness elitization of democracy.

V

Traces of the Judaic notion of democratic elitism can be found also outside of Jewish and Israeli thought and societies. Two significant examples can be detected among the basic tenets of Marxian belief and the political philosophy of John Stuart Mill.

Democratic elitism, in Marxism, is linked with the doctrine of the profound changes in the social, political and human condition that will result from the revolution whose central act is the seizure of power by the proletariat and the nationalization of the means of production. The immediate result of this action is the disappearance of social classes and the establishment of the classless society. Thus, the proletariat, the many, become equal to the few who had been the exploiting and ruling elite and who are brought down from their privileged position. However, this lifting up of the lowly is not to be regarded merely as a triumph of the ideal of equality. It is also a rise of the proletariat to a position of economic and social power—all the (Lord's) people sharing in the privileges of the few. But the rise is not only material and social; it involves a fundamental and beneficial change in the condition of man. For, instead of being subjected to environmental conditions, man "becomes the real, conscious lord of nature." The materialist determinism which, according to Marx, has controlled human history will give way to man-made history. "It is the ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom."²⁰ While pictures of this kind—and one can find more of them in the writings of Marx and Engels—are not identical with the image of "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation," they are a far cry from Marxian

20. Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, III.

materialism. The self-rule of man, the freedom of man, also means a new human dignity and constitutes a moral uplift in the stature of man. Moreover, all men, including the former bourgeoisie, seem to take part in this revolutionary advancement of humanity—the new, perfect and blissful condition is to be shared democratically: All the (Lord's) people will be free.

Whether the Marxian version of democratic elitism—analogueous in outline rather than in detail to the Judaic notions—is the result of Marx's Jewish origin is an open question. Marx could have made a conscious transition from the Judaic to his own approach, or, more likely, could have made the step subconsciously. Possibly, though not likely, the analogy is merely coincidental. Whatever the case, it remains noteworthy that an analogy between Judaism and Marxism, with reference to democratic elitism, can be discerned.

The case of John Stuart Mill, though his philosophy may be less in vogue today, is more pertinent, for it reflects more directly the principle of democratic elitism as embedded in Judaism. Seemingly, his political doctrine could be regarded as no more than a peculiar case of the advocacy of "mixed government." Mill wants to achieve a synthesis of the will of the people (the democratic principle) with the superior knowledge and wisdom of the few (the aristocratic principle). Thus, he suggests the establishment of a Crown-appointed Commission of Codification charged with legislation (as demanded by Parliament), while the Parliament would have the authority to enact or to reject—but not to modify or amend!—the bills: "the Commission would . . . embody the element of intelligence . . . ; Parliament would represent that of will."²¹ In a similar vein, he insists that the executive functionaries—again the few who are qualified for public service—should not be appointed by popular election or by a representative body, but on merit and skill as determined by public competition.²² He expresses the hope that the class conflicts of employers and labour will be tipped in the right direction by those minorities in each class in whom class interest "would be subordinate to reason, justice, and the good of the whole."²³ The wisdom and political virtue of the few will overcome the biased and selfish will of the many.

However, this blending of the democratic and the aristocratic principles is not properly understood without bringing into account the dynamic element and the spiritual-moral concern which animate it. Both of these traits of Mill's approach show affinity to Judaic notions. Thus, Mill asserts that

the most important point of excellence which any form of government can possess is to promote the virtue and intelligence of the people themselves.

21. *Representative Government*, Chap. V, p. 223, in Oxford University Press edition of *On Liberty*, etc.

22. *Ibid.*, Chap. XIV, pp. 349-350.

23. *Ibid.*, Chap. VI, p. 246.

The first question in respect to any political institutions is, how far they tend to foster in the members of the community the various desirable qualities, moral and intellectual.²⁴

Evidently, Mill wants all the (Lord's) people to be as brilliant and as moral as possible. The way to achieve this goal is by participation and involvement in political life, and democratic institutions provide more opportunity than does any other form of government. However, though democracy provides opportunities for commitment and for thinking, it also gives crude power to the rulers—be it the many: they “have no longer need of the arms of reason: they can make their mere will prevail.”²⁵ To guard against such a situation, which would lead to intellectual and moral degeneration, Mill offers a remedy which would be considered as very undemocratic today—the institution of plural voting, plurality to be decided solely on educational qualifications. For it is for the good of the citizen “that he should think that every one is entitled to some influence, but the better and wiser to more than others.”²⁶ Thus, the premium on knowledge, on excellence, will show the people what is the right way and the right direction. It will strengthen the aristocratic nature of democracy and it will enhance the striving for perfection and for influence through learning. One might add that it would pave the way for a kingdom of wise and good men—a proper modern paraphrase for “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”

The ideal of knowledge and moral involvement as the guiding principles of politics and society, the concern that the many do not deteriorate in these qualities and in the determination to strive upwards—all these show a striking resemblance between Mill's doctrine and the Israelite-Judaic ideology of democratic elitism. Is he a direct beneficiary of Judaism in this respect? The answer cannot be clearcut. Mill does not present his theoretical argument with references to Judaic antecedents, which we have, belatedly, provided for him. Yet, he lived in an age when the Bible was a basic part of the British civilization and it may very well have had a profound impact on his outlook, irrespective of the fact that he was not a religious man. He need not have been always aware of such an influence, but he may have absorbed it with the general spirit of the age.

There is, however, a more direct indication of Judaic influence on Mill's political doctrine and it can be found in his *Representative Government*. In discussing the problem of what kind of government is best for society, he concludes that it is one which promotes improvement and progress, without damaging existing achievements. Some civilizations, such as Egypt and China, had regimes of hierarchy and paternal despotism respectively, which helped them to attain a certain level of civiliza-

24. Ibid., Chap. II, p. 167.

25. Ibid., Chap. VIII, p. 289.

26. Ibid., Chap. VIII, pp. 288-289.

tion but which prevented further development for want of liberty of the mind. Not so, says Mill, was the case of the Jews. Though starting with monarchy and hierarchy, which instituted national life and order, their religion facilitated the emergence of Prophets, "persons of genius and a high religious tone." They "were a power in the nation, often more than a match for kings and priests, and kept up, in that little corner of the earth, the antagonism of influences which is the only real security for continued progress." What matters to Mill is that "the canon of inspiration never being complete," the eminent moralists could continue to reprimand, as well as to provide "better and higher interpretations of the national religion." As a result, the Jews "were, next to the Greeks, the most progressive people of antiquity, and, jointly with them, have been the starting-point and main propelling agency of modern cultivation."²⁷

While this tribute of Mill to Judaism is addressed to a long *historical* process rather than to the political and social structure of a democracy in the pragmatic and immediate sense, it is animated by the same concern for change for the better, for moral Progress. For there is a close affinity between the idea of a society organized to promote the influence of the best and to encourage the moral and intellectual improvement of the many, and the historical evolution of a civilization that pursues moral excellence through the ages under the guidance of inspired individuals. Indeed, there is not only an analogy, but a direct link between the two spheres, for it can be said that the institution of Mill's aristocratic democracy would promote moral progress-through-history of the nation that would adopt his advice. The cumulative impact of intellectual and moral elitism in a democratic context over a long period would amount to the Progress achieved through such trends in Judaism.

27. Ibid., Chap. II, pp. 177-178.

Vico, Religious Humanism and the Sephardic Tradition

JOSÉ FAUR

IN A RECENT REVIEW OF ISAIAH BERLIN'S book, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas*, Arnaldo Momigliano remarked:

More specifically he (Isaiah Berlin) must have found in Vico and Herder a confirmation and support in his own lifelong fight for cultural pluralism and respect for minorities (including his own—should I say our own—the Jewish minority).¹

As I hope to show in the following pages, the case was much the same with some leading Sephardic thinkers in the 19th century who, in their struggle to vindicate their own spiritual tradition, perceived the significance of Vico's contributions as a religious humanist and applied some of his views to meet the challenges of secular rationalism (second section). In the first section there is an examination of the views of Voltaire and Vico concerning man and history and of how these views affected the position of the Jew in contemporary society. The last section contains a few notes on the similarities between the Roman and Hebrew traditions. In this way, one can see how Vico and the Hebrews, when defending their respective traditions against the onslaught of secular rationalism, could appreciate the methods and values that were developed in each other's tradition and could apply them in their interpretation of their own history, literature and institutions.

I

Giambattista Vico was born in 1668 in Naples, where he lived most of his life. His greatest academic achievement was the appointment as Professor of Rhetoric at the University of Naples, a chair of minor importance that he occupied until his death in 1744. Except in his native city, his works enjoyed a very limited circulation and outside of Italy he was practically

1. *The New York Review of Books*, Nov. 11, 1976, p. 33

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unknown until recent times. To illustrate, Windelband, in his *History of Philosophy*, published at the turn of this century, was unaware of Vico's contributions.² In our own days, however, thanks to the masterful works of Benedetto Croce and other leading scholars, like G. Giarizzo, S. Mazzarino and G. Riciperati, we are beginning to appreciate the unique genius and momentous contributions of this great thinker. There is no exaggeration in Sir Isaiah Berlin's view that our present perception of the humanities—particularly the sharp contrast between natural science and the humanities—is the effect of Vico's vision:

This formulation, which is by now taken for granted by historians of literature, of ideas, of art, of law, and by historians of science too, and most of all by historians and sociologists of culture influenced by this tradition, is not, and does not need to be, assumed by natural scientists themselves. Yet, before the eighteenth century, there was, so far as I know, no sense of this contrast. Distinctions between the vast realm of philosophy—natural and metaphysical—theology, history, rhetoric, jurisprudence, were not too sharply drawn; there were disputes about method in the Renaissance, but the great cleavage between the provinces of natural science and the humanities was, for the first time, made, or at least revealed, for better or for worse, by Giambattista Vico. Thereby he started a great debate of which the end is not in sight.³

"Vico", in the words of Croce, "is not only a thorough revolutionary, but is quite conscious of being so: he knows himself to be in opposition to all previous theories on the subject."⁴

In order to appreciate the significance of Vico from the perspective of modern Jewry, it is worth considering the predicament of the Jew in the Enlightenment, which offered him the opportunity to participate in the cultural and political life of the State. At the same time, it taught that there are absolute canons of truth determining the ultimate value of all cultures and societies. From the perspective of these canons all religions, and Judaism in particular, were archaic superstitions inherited from a primitive past. The most articulate spokesman of the Enlightenment was Vico's younger contemporary, Voltaire (1694–1778). His derision of Judaism and of Jewish values illustrates the attitude towards religion and traditional institutions that was prevalent at the time: they were the choice target for jokes and irony. (As Arnaldo Momigliano said in a different context, "It was no joke to become a target for Voltaire.") Jews are referred to as a "horde," "a savage and barbaric horde," a "vagabond horde of Arabs," or "an Arabian horde." As for their writings, "the Jews

2. See A. Robert Caponigri, *Time and Idea* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. ix.

3. Sir Isaiah Berlin, "The Divorce between the Sciences and the Humanities," *Salmagundi*, 27 (Summer-Fall 1974): 38-39.

4. Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetics* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1962), p. 227.

were nothing but plagiarists." "The Jews . . . treat their history and ancient fables as their peddlers treat their clothes. They turn them and sell them for new as dearly as possible." The high regard for the Jews among the nations "is a strange example of human stupidity." Voltaire's views about the writings of the ancients in general and the Jews in particular may be summarized as follows:

All these documents are curious, but they are documents of the human imagination alone, from which one cannot learn a single truth, scientific or historical. There isn't a small book of science today that isn't more useful than all the books of antiquity.⁵

Accordingly, participation in the Enlightenment implied an abandonment of the very foundations of the Jewish faith.

Vico was the most serious opponent of this culture of rational secularism. Basically, he was a religious humanist who specifically sought to defend the wisdom of the ancients from the attack and derision of contemporary scholarship and to uphold the basic spiritual and ethical institutions of Western society. The final two paragraphs of his *New Science* underline these two points:

. . . providence, through the order of civil institutions discussed in this work, makes itself palpable for us in three feelings: the first, the marvel, the second, the veneration, hitherto felt by all the learned for the matchless wisdom of the ancients, and the third, the ardent desire with which they burned to seek and attain it. These are, in fact, three lights of the divine providence that aroused in them the aforesaid three beautiful and just sentiments; but these sentiments were later perverted by the conceit of scholars and by the conceit of nations—conceits we have sought in this work to discredit. The uncorrupted feelings are that all the learned should admire, venerate, and desire to unite themselves to the infinite wisdom of God.

To sum up, from all that we have set forth in this work, it is to be finally concluded that this Science carries inseparably with it the study of piety, and that he who is not pious cannot be truly wise.⁶

5. See Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, ed. and tr. by Peter Gay. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967), p. 336. For the other references see *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 62, 249, 289, 335. Cf. Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), index, *s.v.* "Voltaire, anti-Semitism." In my view, the attacks against Judaism by people like Voltaire may have been a subterfuge for criticism against Christianity and the Christian Church—a matter that still required extreme caution—rather than any genuine concern with the subject itself. This applies, all the more, to men like Erasmus who lived at a time when even subtle indiscretions could have tragic consequences.

6. *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, ed. and tr. by T.G. Bergin and M.H. Fisch (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1968), paragraphs 1111-12, p. 426.

The ground of Vico's humanism is the belief in a basic mental language—a kind of metalanguage—common to all mankind that finds expression in a variety of forms:

There must, in the nature of human institutions, be a mental language common to all nations, which uniformly grasps the substance of things feasible in human social life and expresses it with as many diverse modifications as these same things may have diverse aspects.⁷

As we shall presently see, to the Jew in particular Vico offered the intellectual tools to vindicate his own spiritual values and institutions and not to surrender to the dictates of rational secularism. It is important to note, at this juncture, that, unlike Voltaire, Vico never derided the Jew or Judaism. In his Autobiography, where he refers to himself in the third person, he writes:

He always takes account of the essential differences between the Hebrews and the gentiles. The former from the beginning arose and stood steadfast on the practices of an Eternal justice.⁸

We shall proceed to examine some of the most significant differences between Vico and Voltaire in their vision of man and history.

Voltaire conceives of man as an intrinsic part of nature. Therefore, man is to be understood, exclusively, in the light of nature. There are canons, eternal and immutable, that are operative in all spheres of human activities. They are recognizable by human reason and are valid in all times and societies. Vico, on the other hand, conceives of man in historical terms, not in terms of nature. He rejects the notion of eternal and immutable truths, of absolute canons of thought and feeling. According to him, the canons operating in the realm of history are relative and dynamic. There is a constant shift in the patterns and categories of human thought and feeling. Even the most fundamental concepts of the human mind, like freedom and justice, are subject to ongoing change. It is well to emphasize that this change is not a progress from the imperfect to the perfect, since this notion entails an absolute criterion of value. As mentioned, Vico understands man in terms of history. But history is not merely a compilation of data. It is the perception of the specific set of values and conventions of a group or a society at a definite time, the awareness of their categories of feeling and thoughts, what questions they

7. Ibid., paragraph 161, p. 67. It is worth noting that among Spanish-speaking Sephardim there is an expression *ley mental*, "mental law," meaning "Oral Law." Actually, it refers to the basic assumptions that are made at the subspeech level and that underlie the interpretation of a written text.

8. *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, ed. and tr. by M.H. Fisch and T.G. Bergin (Ithaca, New York: Great Seal Books, 1963), pp. 171-172. Cf. *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, paragraphs 125, 166, 167, 298, 334, 350, 365, 373, 481, etc.

asked, what they demanded of themselves, and what they expected from others. Vico conceives of poetry, myth, and religion as stages in the historical development of man. Accordingly, what for Voltaire may have been forms of unreason and human decadence, for Vico are monuments of the human past, encounters with the sublime, expressions of fear, love, hope and doubt.⁹

II

Already in the 18th century, the ideology of the Enlightenment began to affect some prominent Jewish scholars, but its full impact was not felt until the 19th century with the establishment of a new approach to Jewish studies commonly known as *Jüdische Wissenschaft*. It reflected the German ideal of *Kultur*¹⁰ and also projected the German philosophy of history in which sacred and profane histories are totally separated, with no probing into the connections between the religious and political development of mankind.¹¹ Sephardic scholars were unsympathetic towards the ideology and methods of investigation of *Jüdische Wissenschaft*, which was dominating Europe while, at the same time, they were searching for a valid alternative to it. This point was neatly made by Rabbi Henry S. Morais, who remarked, on examining the contributions of Joseph Salvador (1796–1873) in the field of ancient Jewish history, that “In the sphere of philosophical criticism, he differs from the German school, whose theories, transplanted into France, are greatly in vogue.”¹²

Whereas for reasons of geography and ideology, prominent Jewish thinkers in Central and Eastern Europe identified with the Enlightenment, Sephardim found a genuine alternative to rational secularism in the religious humanism of Vico. Accordingly, rather than conceiving of the Jewish past as static and uniform—as the strict traditionalists did—or dismissing it as a mass of irrelevant nonsense—as did the secular rationalists—Sephardic humanists applied Viconian concepts to the interpretation of classical Hebrew texts and history.

Sephardim knew of Vico while he was still an obscure professor of rhetoric at the University of Naples. In November, 1731, he had sent a copy of his *New Science* to Joseph Attias, who, in his reply, mentioned that he had given the work to his friends to read.¹³ Attias was also instrumental in making *New Science* known outside of Italy—in Amsterdam and, possi-

9. See Caponigri, *Op. cit.*, pp. 55–70, for a brilliant analysis of this aspect of Vico, and Berlin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 28–39.

10. See my “Introducing the Materials of Sephardic Culture to Contemporary Jewish Studies,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, LXIII (1974): 339.

11. Cf. Arnaldo Momigliano, *Studies in Historiography* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 53.

12. Henry Samuel Morais, *Eminent Israelites of the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Edward Stern and Co., 1880), p. 323.

13. *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, p. 174.

bly, also, in France. Thus, Vico was extensively quoted by Rabbi Eliahu Benamozegh (1822–1900) of Leghorn, Italy, who, by applying Viconian concepts to Biblical texts and Rabbinic exegesis, was able to show the intimate relationship between the interpretation of the text and the conventions and values making up the historical context of the rabbis.¹⁵ Rabbi Yisrael Moshe Hazzan (1807–1863) of Izmir, Turkey, applied the Viconian concept of the rustic origin of language¹⁶ to the Biblical lexicon. In this way he came to a better understanding of the semantic environment underlying Rabbinic exegesis.¹⁷ These two rabbis—who were highly influential in the Sephardic world—also applied Viconian methodology to a further exploration of the juridical exegesis and rhetoric of the Talmud. The complexity of the subject prevents us from illustrating this method of analysis, and it may, therefore, be more appropriate to quote from one of the most distinguished Jewish scholars of the last century for his impressions on this matter. When the book, *Nahalah le-Yisrael*, by Hazzan, dealing with the laws of inheritance, reached Rabbi S.J. Rapoport (1790–1867), he made the following comment, which was incorporated into the work:

Without indulging in any form of flattery, I must say that never yet has a work of this quality come to me. He shows marvels because of his correct method of interpreting the texts and the way in which they were formulated, not only in the vast field of Talmudics, but also in the field of the exegesis of the verses connected with the subject of inheritance. This was done with the most pure and subtle intellect. They, i.e., the verses which he explained, will suffice to show to every reader, even if he were to be a gentile scholar, what the correct and appropriate law is, without need for recourse to the authority of tradition. However, he also was able to uplift the Jewish tradition as if it were a flag for us—the House of Jacob—on the basis of an extraordinary erudition, deep understanding, and the propositions of theories that are logically correct and quite plausible. This he was able to accomplish on the basis of the Talmud and all of the commentaries that came after it, whether in the Codes of Law or the books of Responsa. . . . He has thoroughly exhausted the subject without leaving any doubts at all on the matter. I am shocked and dismayed that, up to now, the good name of this great man, outstanding among ten thousand, has not been heard throughout the globe.¹⁸

14. See his commentary to the Pentateuch, *Em La-Miqra*, 5 vols. (Leghorn: 1862-1863), vol. 1: 3b, 44b, 48b, 51b, 79b, 87b, 109a, 158a; vol. 2: 52b; vol. 3: 10a, 70b; vol. 4: 38b; vol. 5: 21a, 36a, 66b, 70a, 120a-b, 142b, 153b, 178b. On his life and works, see Sabato Morais, *Italian Hebrew Literature* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1926), p. 213. For some interesting glimpses into Benamozegh, see Henry Morais, *Op. cit.*, pp. 23–27.

15. For some illustrations of this method, see my "Sephardim in the XIXth Century: New Directions and Old Values," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, XLIV (1977): 29–52.

16. *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, paragraph 240, p. 78.

17. See his *She'orit Ha-Nahalah* (Alexandria: 1862), pp. 26 (#95), 28 (#112), 79; for the application of this principle to the Biblical lexicon, see *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30, 32-33, 35 ff, 76 ff. etc.

18. *Nahalah le-Yisrael* (Alexandria: 1862), p. 69.

In order to gain a better insight into the attitude of Sephardim towards Vico's religious humanism, it should be noted that there were some scholars who, independently of him, were developing methods of interpretation reflecting some of his same concerns.

There were some like Benedetto Frizzi Cohen (1756–1844), who wrote *Petaḥ 'Enayim*, 7 vols. (Leghorn: I. Costa e C: 1878–1880) on the aggadic portions of the Talmud,—a very popular book among Sephardim that somehow has escaped the attention of modern scholars—who may have had direct knowledge of Vico's *New Science* and, therefore, applied some of his methods to the interpretation of Rabbinic text. But there were others who could not possibly have had any knowledge of Vico and yet exhibited some of the same methodology underlying his vision of the humanities. By way of illustration, we shall examine how a Sephardic rabbi who had no contact with Western thought and culture applied one of the Viconian principles to the interpretation of Rabbinic exegesis.

Vico had made clear the gross anachronism created by those who tried to interpret the words and ideas of one historical period according to the categories of thought and modes of perception current in their own times. This principle was the major concern of Rabbi Rephael Verdugo (1747–1821) of Meknes, Morocco. In the second volume of his work, *Me Menuḥot*, he discusses guidelines that might help in arriving at a better understanding of Rabbinic exegesis. In his Introduction, he remarks that “a believer in the Torah is not duty-bound to accept lies in order to justify the literal truth of the words of the Rabbis.” Thus, he criticizes those who interpolate the text of the Rabbis with their own specific values and modes of thinking in order to “explain” a difficult passage. Referring to a clever explanation of one such passage, he observes:

And the Rabbis from their (divine) abode of Truth, will surely give testimony and declare that they never intended to say what was put into their words. . . . The correct method that one should pursue is that our Rabbis of revered memory were men and not gods. And although their wisdom was enormous, nonetheless they did not cease to be men, men who sometimes express themselves clearly, at other times cryptically, according to the occasion, [i.e., conventionalism], and the time.¹⁹

This approach to the Rabbinic text is the basic principle of Verdugo's magnum opus, *Sharbit Ha-Zahab*, a commentary on the entire Talmud.

III

The main intellectual interests of Vico were jurisprudence, rhetoric, history and philology, all of which were intimately connected with the Roman tradition around which Vico developed his major ideas. A few notes on similarities between Hebrew and Roman traditions will help us

19. The Introduction is not paginated.

appreciate his idea of religious humanism from a Hebrew perspective.

Of all the peoples in antiquity, only two, the Hebrews and the Romans, developed a system of jurisprudence.²⁰ In my view, it was their passion for law that singled them out as the only peoples of their day who severely criticized and—in the case of the Hebrews—attempted to resist effectively the Hellenistic way of life.²¹ Greek philosophers saw the highest criterion of truth and ethics in nature, but, to the Romans and the Hebrews, law was the supreme authority. Hence, neither the Romans nor the Hebrews were interested in nature, and both were equally indifferent to science. To them, rhetoric—and not logic—was the highest form of expression. The Romans and the Hebrews also cultivated their respective national histories (in contradistinction to the universal history of the Greeks). Philology and history are the links between rhetoric and jurisprudence. Thus, the four major intellectual concerns of Vico.

To my mind it is unlikely that these similarities had escaped Vico's attention. The profound respect and veneration that characterizes his treatment of the Hebrews and their tradition, and his conception of the Hebrew People as the paradigm of eternal justice, indicate that he closely identified both intellectually and emotionally with the Hebrews.

As we shall see, there may have been other intellectual bonds between Vico and the Hebrews. For this, we must touch upon the history of religious humanism, particularly in Europe before Erasmus.

Let us begin by pointing out that a large number of the most distinguished humanists of Spain in the 15th and 16th centuries were former Jews who had converted.²² Moreover, the great religious humanists, in particular, were former Jews who, either themselves or their parents, had converted, such as Juan de Lucena (born c. 1430, died after 1500), Juan Luis Vives (1491–1540), Juan de Valdes (died 1541?), Fray Luis de León (1527–1591) and, probably, Benito Arias Montano (1527–1598).

The most distinguished Jewish convert, and one who may be considered the founder of religious humanism in Europe, was Alonso de Cartagena (1385–1456), who was in close contact with Poggio, Bruni, Aeneas Sylvius (Pius II) and Pizzolpasso. About fifty letters of his correspondence with Decembrio are extant. Cartagena represents the first "civic" humanism in Spain. But, unlike his contemporaries, who placed a greater

20. The Persians also seem to have developed a system of jurisprudence. However, very little of it has reached us to allow for an intelligent judgment as to its content and character.

21. See Arnaldo Momigliano, "The Fault of the Greeks," *Daedalus*, 104 (Spring 1975): 12–15; and Elias Bickerman, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), pp. 101–105, 178–179.

22. The following names: Diego de Valera, Alonso de Palencia, Alfonso de Alcalá, Diego de San Pedro, Luis de Lucena, Hernando del Pulgar, Pablo Coronel, Alfonso de Zamora, Juan de Vergara, Diego de Lainez, Gaspar de Grajal, Alonso Gudiel, Pedro de Lima, Andres de Lugana, Bartolome Torres Naharro, Luis de la Cadena, Francisco Sanchez de las Brozas, Sebastian Fox Morcillo, Cristobal de Mesa and Casiodoro de Reina, are just a few of the long list of distinguished humanists of Jewish background who flourished in Spain in these two centuries.

emphasis on the secular aspect of civic life, Cartagena—like Vico—always underlined the religious framework within which ethics, politics, and laws, by necessity, exist. It is worth noting, in this connection, that, like Vico, Cartagena's main intellectual concerns were four: jurisprudence, rhetoric, history and philology. Cartagena's religious humanism had a lasting influence on the development of humanism in Europe.²³

The most significant aspect of the religious humanism of Jewish converts of the type of Alonso de Cartagena was their recourse to the Hebrew heritage of Christianity. This may be best appreciated when we realize that the deepest intellectual and spiritual struggle that perennially surfaces within Christianity is the conflict between the pagan and Hebraic traditions that it adopted. From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, Christian thinkers attempted to resolve this conflict adequately. Whereas many proposed to do so from within pagan tradition and values, humanists like Cartagena conceived of the Hebraic tradition in Christianity as the only framework capable of adequately coping with the conflict.

We are now in a position better to understand Vico's main objectives. As it was brilliantly stated by Peter Gay, the goal of the Enlightenment was "to assimilate the two pasts they had inherited—Christian and Pagan—to pit them against one another and thus to secure their independence."²⁴ However, whereas the *philosophe* emphasized the Pagan element of Western tradition, Vico, like Cartagena, saw in the Hebraic tradition the paradigm of eternal justice.

The best representatives of religious humanism among the Hebrews outside of the Iberian Peninsula were Yehuda Abarbanel (c. 1460-post 1522), known in Italy as Leon Hebreo, and Moshe Almosnino (c. 1515-c. 1580) in the Ottoman Empire. Another humanist of the same tradition, Menasseh ben Israel (1605-1657) of Amsterdam, deserves special mention. He was very close to Grotius and seems to have exercised considerable influence on him, and he, in turn, greatly influenced Vico. This triangle really needs to be adequately examined in order to understand the genesis of many of the fundamental ideas of Vico and their affinity with Sephardic thinking.

In conclusion, religious humanism among Sephardim in the 19th century was grounded on a long tradition that began in the Iberian Peninsula before 1492. It came to the foreground again, in modern times, in order to meet the challenges of the materialistic ideology of the Enlightenment that dominated Europe. This will help us understand why Sephardic thinkers in the 19th century were ready to perceive the significance of Vico's vision, to accept his methodology, and to apply it to their literature and specific historical process.

23. I take this opportunity to thank Dr. Ottavio de Camillo for the valuable insights and data on Cartagena that he shared with me. See his book on Cartagena, *El Humanismo Castellano* (Valencia: Horizon, 1976), for an excellent treatment of this topic.

24. Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), p. xi.

The Needs of Jewish Scholarship in America

NORMAN ROTH

FEW SCHOLARS IN RECENT TIMES HAVE contributed as much to Jewish scholarship or, for that matter, to general scholarship in philosophy and religion, as the late Harry Austryn Wolfson. His work on Philo, the Church fathers, the ethics of Spinoza, on the vital importance of Crescas in the history of Aristotelianism and modern science, will remain classics; and to this list we may be able to add his latest work on the history of the *kalam*. All students are indebted to him, and all will continue to utilize the fruits of his researches, certainly a more significant tribute than anything that could be said about him.

One of the very first articles that Wolfson wrote, when still a young instructor in Jewish literature and philosophy, was entitled "The Needs of Jewish Scholarship in America" (*Menorah Journal*, 1921, vol. 7). Perhaps it might be appropriate at this time to revive the outlines of that article, since the basic "needs" which he stated then remain very much the same needs for Jewish scholarship today. Indeed, progress has been surprisingly little and slow since that article was published. The difference would seem to be in the quantity, rather than quality, of what is being done. Most colleges today have instituted some sort of "Jewish studies" program, an academic discipline almost beyond the dreams of the young instructor at Harvard in 1921, but there is little understanding of what should constitute "Jewish studies" and almost no coordinated effort to ensure systematic development or quality. Wolfson's "needs" remain, therefore, of pressing concern.

1. To Prepare Jewish Scholars

In 1921, aside from the rabbinical seminaries and Dropsie College (which, under Cyrus Adler and a faculty of distinguished scholars, provided unique leadership), there were scarcely any schools in this country where preparation for Jewish scholarship could be gained. In the following years, due to the efforts of men like Salo Baron, Guido Kisch and others who came to this country during and after the First World War, the situation began to change. However, there are still relatively few graduate

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schools qualified to offer the kind of training that is necessary to prepare scholars with the ability to do research in Jewish studies. The sad fact is that the number of these schools is declining, not increasing, in some cases due to the retirement of competent senior faculty, while in others it is due to lack of direction. The current financial crisis in the universities is another serious problem, which will probably get worse instead of better, and may affect the whole future of Jewish studies. As the costs of education continue to soar into an astronomical range beyond the means of many, and as job insecurity continues, increasing numbers of young people are deciding that it is not worth going to college, and, of those who do go, many are opting for job-oriented programs that leave little or no room for "frills" like Humanities, let alone Jewish studies. But this is a separate issue, to which we shall return briefly later on. At this point it might be well to clarify what we mean by the "Jewish studies" for which scholars are to be trained. There really is no authoritative or consistent definition. The Association for Jewish Studies, the only professional organization in this country attempting to impose some order on the chaos, has one set of standards, while the World Jewish Congress, for instance, has another. Both organizations are fond of "questionnaires" and "surveys," which then sink into the bottomless pit of meaningless statistics, never to be heard of again.

The only practical definition of Jewish studies, then, would seem to be in terms of the areas of interest of those who "do" Jewish studies for a living. Some of these (and this is not intended to be a definitive listing of any kind) include: Bible and Biblical (or Ancient Near Eastern) history, Semitic languages (other than Hebrew), Hebrew language, Jewish history (but usually not including Islamic history, which is seldom taught, and rarely divided into specific categories of "ancient," "medieval," and "modern"), Jewish (sometimes also Islamic) philosophy, Hebrew literature (almost always exclusively modern), religion, Israel and Zionism, and sometimes also Yiddish. Another area, which is often overlooked, is librarianship and bibliographical research.

Probably the strongest area in Jewish scholarship (excluding Bible) in this country today, in terms of the quality and quantity of scholars, is medieval Jewish philosophy. Yet the death of Prof. Wolfson and the recent retirement of another great scholar in the field, Alexander Altmann, should be a warning against complacency. Modern Jewish philosophy, on the other hand, suffers from great neglect. In recent years we have at long last achieved translations of the major Jewish philosophical works of Mendelssohn, Cohen, and Rosenzweig, yet few schools offer courses in the thought of these or other modern Jewish philosophers.

Jewish history is certainly an area of prime importance, but there is an alarming lack of schools prepared to offer thorough and competent instruction in many of its aspects. Where there may be only one, or perhaps two, scholars specializing in Jewish history in a school, it is

obvious that they cannot properly prepare graduate scholars in fields other than their own particular specialization. The result is that, on the undergraduate level, hastily constructed "survey courses" are offered by teachers who have been trained (if at all) to specialize in a particular period. Such a situation would not be tolerated in any respectable history department in any college. Then, too, there are important areas and periods which are totally neglected. For instance, the history and development of the Sefardic communities has received little attention outside of Israel (and there, too, surprisingly little work of real significance has been done).

The same generalizations can be made about almost all areas of Jewish studies. Literature, aside from the modern Hebrew, is neglected. Medieval Hebrew literature and Jewish literature in other languages (especially Spanish) have not received anything like the concern that they deserve. We still do not have even an adequate and accurate history of medieval literature (not excepting the well-intentioned but, in many ways, marred translation of the old Zinberg history—a work still best consulted in the Yiddish original or its Hebrew translation).

The study of the Hebrew language has become, for the most part, a mere "teacher-training" program to produce instructors in fundamental Hebrew language courses. There is very little research in the historical development and structure of Hebrew and there is a desperate need for a real historical dictionary of the language which would indicate the development and usages of terms in various medieval and ancient traditions. Such a task requires scholars who have the training to investigate a wide variety of texts and source materials, but the expertise is simply not available in this country today.

The training of Jewish scholars should be not only in specifically Jewish fields of concentration, but in related disciplines as well. One of the most significant contributions of Salo Baron is that he is the first Jewish historian with a proper knowledge of general history who has not dealt with Jewish history as if it took place in a vacuum. Whether in history, philosophy, literature or language, Jewish scholars must be equally at home in the general culture of the period and of the subject with which they deal. This means, of course, that the Jewish scholar must get his training in the finest possible school where there is access to both an outstanding faculty in different fields and to an outstanding library.

But the need to prepare Jewish scholars goes beyond the requirements for graduate education, although this is perhaps most pressing at the moment. Attention must also be given to promising undergraduates, so that they will be qualified and encouraged to pursue advanced work. The major concern here must be language training. No four-year college program of Hebrew instruction now in existence can possibly provide adequate knowledge of the language as required for advanced research in any field of Judaica. Some students may have the added advantage of

having gone to an elementary Jewish day school that provides a really excellent Hebrew background, but their number is so small that it is not to be relied upon. The only answer, and it is by no means completely satisfactory, seems to be to guarantee a period of at least a year and more, if possible, of study in Israel, either as part of the undergraduate program or upon its completion and prior to admission to graduate work. Furthermore, it is not only Hebrew that is necessary for Jewish research. Undergraduates must be encouraged, in fact required, to obtain maximum preparation in at least one other language. Passing "proficiency examinations" in American colleges is no guarantee that one can read fluently the kind of material that is necessary for research, and it must become the responsibility of the departments of Jewish studies to see that their students do receive the proper linguistic training.

2. To Subsidize Jewish Scholars

Jewish studies is still an area of desperate need. To some extent, we can rely on the regular financial assistance programs of schools for the subsidy of students (although without the generous help of Jewish foundations, such as the Memorial Foundation for Hebrew Culture, many of us would not have been able to complete our work). But additional funds must be made available for undergraduate training in Israel and, most importantly, to subsidize the research of scholars.

It is particularly this last area that Wolfson emphasized in his article, and it is one in which little progress has been made. In order for scholars to do research, it is often necessary that they travel or that they have monies available for the purchase of photographic reproductions of manuscripts. Supplies of funding in the academic community are drying up, and it is increasingly difficult for scholars who are not in science or technology to obtain grants. "Esoteric" fields of research like Jewish studies are bound to suffer the most in the inevitable cutbacks to come.

3. To Publish the Fruits of Scholarship

It was due to Wolfson's vision in this area that the Medieval Academy undertook the project, which is still not fully realized, of the publication of Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle. But this is only one small, although important, step in the direction of producing the hundreds of texts that remain in manuscript—texts of far more central concern and relevance to Jewish scholarship than those of Averroes. (Of course, that project was not intended to be the publication of Jewish texts, and Hebrew texts were used only when the originals had not survived.)

Funds must also be made available for putting out the results of research. The high cost of publishing has greatly increased the reluctance of publishers to accept manuscripts that are not clearly "marketable." In

turn, the high price of books has put them almost beyond the reach of those who would most benefit from and utilize them—students, and even many professors. It would be a very great service, indeed, for some foundation, or for individuals, to undertake a subsidy program in cooperation with a publisher, (Jewish or non-Jewish), for the issuance of important works in Jewish studies. This would supplement the already existing excellent, but necessarily limited, publishing programs of some companies, foremost of whom is the Jewish Publication Society.

Another area of real concern is the paucity of scholarly journals devoted to Jewish studies and research. There are very few in this country; none, for example, devoted exclusively to Jewish history. Those few that do exist are often overscheduled and months behind in publication date. The time is overdue to remedy this situation. Without a forum in which the results of research can be promptly reported and made accessible to other scholars, the incentive to research is quickly dulled.

4. *To Bring to Light our "Buried Treasures"*

As noted above, there are literally hundreds of unpublished manuscripts which are of major importance to Jewish research—in philosophy, literature, history, commentaries, etc. Of the significant medieval texts in astronomy and science very few are available. Furthermore, it is a well-known fact that almost every text that was published before this century is likely to be full of errors and in need of correction according to the original manuscripts. Too often, the practice has been merely to reprint these earlier editions, adding, if anything, still more errors. Every effort should now be made to set up the coordinated and systematic editing and publishing of important texts, ideally under the supervision of an international team of experts. Perhaps this is a pipe dream, but it could be a reality.

5. *To Set Standards for Professionalism*

This final category is one which I add to Wolfson's list. Indeed, when he wrote his article, there was no need for this concern at all. To the degree that the other "needs" are realized, professionalism would perhaps automatically result; but the seriousness of the problem does not permit us to wait for such a utopia.

I already noted at the outset the serious financial crisis which has affected our universities. Experts agree that it can only get worse, and they point to a number of factors that combine to ensure this dismal prospect: the decline in the number of children in public schools, leading to an inevitable decline in college enrollment; the soaring cost of education that will cause further declines; the insecurity of the job market, with

the actual higher unemployment rate for college graduates than for non-graduates acting as a deterrent to college attendance.

"Cut-back" is already the watchword of most colleges and universities. Faculty positions are not being filled; indeed, faculty are being let go, and numerous other budget reductions are in evidence. As one of the newest and, in a sense, most "esoteric," of the academic programs, Jewish studies may be in danger. There is no definite evidence yet that it *is*, but there is a distinct possibility that it *could* be.

For this very practical and mundane reason, it is absolutely essential to create for Jewish studies an aura of respectability which does not yet really exist in the academic environment as a whole. The academic professions are encrusted with prejudices, traditions and attitudes. Good or bad, they are a reality. Only by adjusting to, and assimilating, at least certain of these traditions can the field of Jewish studies earn the respect that it deserves and which it must have in order to survive.

Recently a student who had received an excellent graduate education, concentrating in modern French history, discovered that he could not get a position teaching on the college level. He was hired by a good private high school to teach history and French language. No respectable college would regularly consider doing such a thing. Yet it happens frequently in one area: Jewish studies. Every year brings offers of positions in Jewish studies that would be humorous if they did not reveal the basic lack of respect for the integrity of the discipline. A scholar is trained, for example, in Jewish history. Furthermore, he specialized in a particular period and perhaps even in a geographical area of interest. He may have mastered many languages, but this in no way implies that he is qualified to teach them. Hebrew, like any other language, requires the mastery of certain techniques of instruction and an almost exclusive concentration in it in order to teach it properly. It does not follow that because a person has a degree in *any* Jewish subject, he is qualified to teach *all* Jewish subjects.

One college was seeking a person to teach a combination of courses (Gnosticism, Merkabah mysticism, Qabbalah, etc.) that only Gershom Scholem would be qualified to handle. While one wonders what prompted the school to decide on these offerings in "Jewish studies" for freshmen and sophomores, one wonders even more at the temerity of the individual who would undertake to teach them.

One way to end this kind of bargain-basement approach is to develop departments of Jewish studies, chaired by competent scholars with a broad enough vision and understanding of what constitutes a balanced program that is suited to the needs and abilities of undergraduates. In fact, there are very few such departments in existence today.

Professionalism also implies honesty on the part of the candidate. There are still many who are eager to go along with the shotgun approach to Jewish studies. Trained presumably in one field, they offer themselves as competent to teach everything from Bible to modern Jewish history.

Professionalism also implies that scholars be professionally trained and competent for research and teaching in their chosen field of study. Rabbinical seminaries are intended for the training of rabbis, who perform an important and sacred service in ministering to the religious needs of their congregations. These seminaries are not, however, professional graduate schools, prepared to offer adequate training for secular Jewish scholarship. The automatic conferral of an honorary doctorate upon rabbis some years after their ordination does not qualify them as research scholars or professors. Should an individual who has a Ph.D. from a secular graduate school desire to become a rabbi, no matter what amount of training he already has in Jewish studies, he must enroll in a rabbinical seminary. It would not seem to be asking too much to suggest that the reverse should also apply: that rabbis wishing to become professors should enroll in a secular graduate school for the necessary preparation not only in Jewish studies, but in general background as well.

Many rabbis who have left their calling and become professors of Jewish studies have proved, of course, to be excellent teachers. but the results in terms of research and publication have been discouraging in the extreme. Nor is it likely, in most cases, that these men are in a position to evaluate the credentials and competence of graduates of secular institutions of higher learning who are seeking positions. The issue of theological bias in the interpretation of secular areas of Jewish culture is also a point worthy of consideration.

When the recent demand for Jewish studies in colleges and universities first arose, there was often no place to turn for teachers except to the seminaries. In the last few years, however, that situation has begun to change, and universities with highly respectable graduate programs have begun to train scholars in Jewish research who have the same rigorous standards and background as are demanded in other disciplines.

Historians (and the same general remarks apply to other scholars), are expected to be familiar not only with their own specialization, but with the tools and methodology of the historian's profession in general. They are expected to be conversant with the results of research in other areas of history and related disciplines. They are expected, indeed required, to publish their own findings. Unless the Jewish historian can meet these same criteria, and is not merely offering a survey course on "The History of the Jews," he will not be capable of winning the respect of historians and scholars from other fields which the discipline must have if it is to survive.

It is not too much to say that the Jewish scholar must know what his colleagues in related fields know, and the Jewish aspects of the area as well. Only through such thorough and systematic training can we avoid the kind of mistakes that have resulted, for example, in the attempts to argue that the *Mishlei Sendebar* in its original source is a Jewish creation, or that there existed a "Jewish feudal principality" in medieval France, entirely unknown to medieval historians. Such publications quickly result

in embarrassment, and do nothing to improve the prestige of Jewish studies generally.

Since the publication of Prof. Wolfson's article, Jewish studies has come a long way in this country, but there are still numerous obstacles to overcome and dangers to be avoided. The success of the outcome depends to a great extent on how well we meet the challenges of the "needs of Jewish scholarship" which remain as important today—if not more important—as when they were first enumerated.

Unorthodox Judaism

By Norman B. Mirsky. How the Jew remains a Jew under pressure of the all but irresistible forces that emanate from the larger society around him is the subject of Rabbi Mirsky's study. He examines the several traditions and many crosscurrents within Judaism, and discusses the paradoxes and dilemmas they pose to the American Jew in search of a secure identity. He finds organized Judaism largely unresponsive to the wants and needs of large numbers of its congregants involved in that search, and sees this as the cause of the present drifting away from the traditional synagogue that has led, in a few notable instances, to the establishment of "new culture" congregations that lie outside the Jewish community, and to such phenomena as the "Jesus Jews" and temples led by atheistic rabbis. \$12.00

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“The Fourth Reich”—German-Jewish Religious Life in America Today

MICHAEL N. DOBKOWSKI

IF ONE WERE TO UNDERSTAND THE MAJOR developments of modern Judaism—approximately from Mendelssohn to the Holocaust—and to synthesize their so varied and disconnected aspects, the following general outline of a theme might result: In the wake of Jewish emancipation in the French Revolutionary era, the hitherto unrevealed wealth of European Enlightenment culture was opened up to the Jew. In the resulting struggle of ideas which ensued between this free and liberating milieu and the traditional Jewish religious culture which was still based on a literal interpretation of the Torah and the oral traditions, Judaism inevitably suffered. The ideals of humanism, of the free individual, of secularism, romanticism, and progress, as well as the attractive options opened up by the spectacular developments in technology, natural science and the Industrial Revolution—all these stood out in sharp contrast to traditional Judaism which made an absolute claim on the Jew's life in all his endeavors from cradle to grave. The very nature and extent of these requirements seemed to make lofty thoughts impossible and put Judaism in a straitjacket. Every act in life was ticketed and marked, this forbidden, that permitted. As the Jews left the self-perpetuating isolation provided by their ghetto communities, they were essentially unprepared to reconcile their ancient loyalties with the heady air of modern secularism. This resulted initially in a significant secession from Judaism through baptism and mixed marriage—which appeared to be the ultimate tickets of admission into European society, as Henrich Heine thought.¹

1. See, Hans Kohn, “The Jew Enters Western Culture,” *Menorah Journal* (April, 1930); Julian Morgenstern, *As a Mighty Stream: The Story of Reform Judaism* (Philadelphia, 1949); Jacob B. Agus, *Guideposts in Modern Judaism* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1954); Jacob B. Agus, *Modern Philosophies of Judaism* (New York: Behrman's Jewish Book House, 1941); Nathan Rotenstreich, *Tradition and Reality: the Impact of History on Modern Jewish Thought* (New York: Random House, 1972); Samuel H. Bergman, *Faith and Reason: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought* (Washington, D.C.: B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, 1961); Kurt Wilhelm, “The Jewish Community in the Post-Emancipation Period,” *Leo Baeck*

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In many respects, this religio-philosophical scenario was most pronounced in Germany. It seems ironic that it was precisely these German Jews who, perhaps among all the Jews of Western Europe were most enthusiastic in their acceptance of the opportunities of the Enlightenment and assimilation, also agonized so severely over the preservation of their Jewish community, culture and faith.

Yet German Jewry did not disintegrate in the face of Nazi oppression. All was not lost during the Hitler period. Contrary to general belief, the return to Judaism did not begin with the collapse of the Weimar Republic and was not a reaction to the threat of Nazism.² It resulted from the positive forces already active in the German-Jewish consciousness. It was given particular impetus by the anti-Semitic shocks occasioned by World War I and the contact that it fostered with the vibrant Judaism of Eastern Europe, as occurred in the case of Franz Rosenzweig. Jewish spirit came to life in almost every one of its aspects. It was produced by sensitive young Jews who sought for new roots in a crisis society. Men like Fritz Schwarzschild, Paul Eppstein, Hugo Hahn, Max Weiner, Paul Lazarus, Eduard Strauss, and many others met, in this enterprise, with older men like Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber and Eugene Tæubler in the *Lehrhaus* movement, or in neo-Orthodox groups. The subsequent rise of Nazism intensified these stirrings and feelings, of course, but it did not create them. The real *teshuvah* began during Weimar when activists advocated the necessity for a genuine return to the sources of the Jewish tradition.³

What happened in Germany between 1933 and 1939 has since been obscured by the mass slaughter of the Jewish people and the suffering of millions of non-Jews. It is a moot question whether times of stress make people sincerely more religious or only temporarily so and whether, after 1933, German Jews turned more to religion than they had done before. But there can be no doubt that, as Joachim Prinz reported, the synagogue became the meeting place where the Jew hoped for a word of comfort and encouragement and where he could find a semblance of sanity and stability, even defiance. As Lucy Dawidowicz described it: "Jews felt secure and at home in the company of other Jews in a Jewish setting. People who had never been in a synagogue before came to pray or, at the very least, . . ." to be shielded from the loneliness outside. The esoteric use

Institute Year Book, 2, (1957), pp. 47-75; Jacob Marcus, *Rise and Destiny of the German Jew* (Cincinnati, 1934); Marvin Lowenthal, *The Jews of Germany* (Philadelphia, 1944); Alexander Altmann, "Theology in Twentieth-Century German Jewry," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 1 (1956), pp. 193-216.

2. I am referring to the religio-philosophical developments associated with Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber and Leo Baeck, among others.

3. Herbert Strauss, "The Jugendverband. A Social and Intellectual History," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 6 (1961), pp. 206-235; Eva G. Reichmann, "Der Breussteinswandel der deutschen Juden," in *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution 1916-1923; Ein Sammelband herausgegeben von Werner F. Mosse, unter Mitwirkung von Arnold Paucker, Tübingen 1971. (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Institute 25)*, pp. 511-612.

of *aggadic* material was revived in sermons to comfort congregations that listened like few others in Jewish history. Rabbis like Joachim Prinz and Max Gruenewald preached before literally captive audiences. "Outside in the streets one could not talk against Hitler, but in the synagogues, which were overflowing, there was no limit to the symbolic rejection as reflected in prayers and holidays, like Passover, which celebrated the deliverance from oppression; Purim, which easily equated Hitler with Haman; and Hanukkah, which brought to life the battle of a handful of Jews against overwhelming majorities." The Hanukkah *haftarah* afforded rich opportunities for this new imaginative exegesis of the Bible with a moral and devotional purpose: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Old prayers and texts were given a new vitality and reality. "Open my heart through Thy Torah/That my soul may follow Thy commandments/ And all who rise up against me for evil/ May speedily see their design as naught/Their purpose defeated." To be a Jew was now a new discovery, and to emphasize one's Jewishness in even the smallest and subtlest ways, in the face of danger and disgrace, was a form of resistance and a restatement of one's identity.⁴

The common fate and danger of Nazism drew the Jews together and revealed the hidden sources of their strength and resilience. This was true not only of the more assimilated and less formally religious elements who now flocked to a Joachim Prinz or a Max Gruenewald and who benefited from the varied institutions and services of the *Gemeinden* which continued to function under strained circumstances, but of the Orthodox as well. Jewish life within the Adass Yeshurun of Cologne and the K'hal Adass Yeshurun of Frankfurt, for example, intensified; services and *shiurim* remained very well attended, and the youth in particular threw themselves vigorously and enthusiastically into the discovery and deeper understanding of the sources of Judaism. There was no compromise here, no retreat, but a stubborn refusal to be stripped of their religious dignity by the brutal oppressor.⁵ Illusory, yes, and certainly myopic, given the realities, but no less sincere for the attempt.

The growing thirst for knowledge, for identity, was not limited to youth; adults were equally eager to learn, to study, to comprehend. The remarkable effervescence of Jewish adult education in 1933–37 was one of the most distinctive and original attempts, by positive Judaism, at helping the assimilated to overcome their inner upheaval and loss of direction. On November 19, 1933, the Frankfurt *Lehrhaus*, which had

4. Joachim Prinz, "A Rabbi Under the Hitler Regime," in Herbert A. Strauss and Kurt R. Grossman, *Gegenwart im Rückblick* (Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehn Verlag, 1970); Isi Jacob Eisner, "Reminiscences of the Berlin Rabbinical Seminary," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 12 (1967), pp. 46–47; Michael L. Munk, "Austrittsbewegung und Berliner Adass Israel-Gemeinde, 1869–1939," in Strauss and Grossman, *Gegenwart im Rückblick*, pp. 146–147; Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933–1945* (N.Y. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), pp. 177–179.

5. Alexander Carlebach, *Adass Yeshurun of Cologne* (Belfast: William Mullan & Son, Ltd. 1964), p. 138.

been closed shortly after Rosenzweig's death in 1929, was reopened by Martin Buber. Many a local Jewish community followed this example and founded a *Lehrhaus* as a central institution of adult studies, a haven where Jews could find succor and self-respect through understanding. A half-year later, the *Mittelstelle für jüdische Erwachsenenbildung* (Central Office for Jewish Adult Education), with Buber at its head, was set up within the *Reichsvertretung*, the Jewish governing body. A broad program evolved—which covered the range of religious and cultural thought. The *Mittelstelle* and all its work constituted, in Ernst Simon's estimation, a bulwark of spiritual resistance.⁶ Yet some German Jews, in retrospect, have come to regard this chapter of resurgence with self-reproach, because it slowed down the inevitable process of dissolution.⁷ "A joint historic guilt," wrote a survivor of those times, rests on those who believed "that we had very, very much time."⁸

Although telling, this is a criticism from hindsight and must be tempered. The National Socialist victory in 1933 shook the Jewish community. To its credit, however, it rallied, within a few short months, summoning an energy and will for organizational unity and stimulating a powerful resurgence of Jewish identity. The community's error was in the miscalculated belief that Hitler's dictatorship would be short-lived or, at the very least, that a tolerable *modus vivendi* would be established. In truth, this was the error of Europe and of the world. In this context, the institutions that were created, in conjunction with the revitalized synagogue, and the varied activities of the *Reichsvertretung*, the Rabbinical Union and Kurt Singer's *Kulturbund*, formed the backbone of moral resistance precisely when the Jewish community in Germany seemed to be hopelessly at the mercy of Hitler's gang. This was a reasonable approach until 1938, when the accelerated confiscation of Jewish property and the final expulsion of the Jews from the economy began.⁹ The mass arrests of June were followed by the expulsion of the *Ostjuden* at the end of October. A few days later, on *Kristallnacht* (Nov. 10–11), the Jewish community of Germany went up in flames. Buber realized that more than merely buildings had been consumed, that the spirit which they had housed could never be recaptured again in the same fashion and thereby tolled an elegy for that era:

6. Max Gruenewald, "Education and Culture of the German Jews under Nazi Rule," *The Jewish Review*, 5 (1948): 56–83; Ernst Simon, "Jewish Adult Education in Nazi Germany as Spiritual Resistance," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 1 (1956), pp. 68–104; Herbert Freeden, "A Jewish Theatre under the Swastika," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 1 (1956), pp. 142–162.

7. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).

8. George Lubinsky, quoted in Ball-Kaduri, "The National Representation of Jews in Germany," *YVS*, 2 (1959): 174; Dawidowicz, *Op. cit.*, p. 188.

9. Max Gruenewald, "About the *Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden*," *YIVO Colloquium* (December 2–5, 1967), pp. 42–54; Max Gruenewald, "The Beginning of the *Reichsvertretung*," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 1, (1956), pp. 56–67; Adolf Kober, "Jewish Communities in Germany from the Age of Enlightenment to their Destruction by the Nazis," *Jewish Social Studies*, (July, 1947); Dawidowicz, *Op. cit.*, p. 195.

I testify: it was the most extraordinary and meaningful circumstance. For the symbiosis of German and Jewish existence, as I experienced it in the four decades that I spent in Germany, was the first and the only one since the Spanish Era to receive the highest confirmation through creativity . . . But this symbiosis is at an end and it is not likely to return.¹⁰

Yet, those survivors who were able to leave and establish roots elsewhere, particularly in America, benefited from this experience. They brought with them the German-Jewish heritage of Moses Mendelssohn, Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Leo Baeck, of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, of the neo-Orthodoxy of Samson R. Hirsch, Isaak Breuer, Ezriel Hildesheimer and Ezra Munk. They were fortified by this past, and attempted, as best they could, to transplant these traditions to their new environments. In this effort, their success was mixed.

The most tangible, visible result of this impulse towards religious survival in America was the founding, by these German refugees, of their own religious organizations: synagogues and schools.¹¹ The fact that a large proportion of the Nazi victims chose to develop their religious life independently is not surprising, in the light of the historical record or of the immigration experience generally. Most groups have established immigrant churches and Jews are no exception. As long as there has been a Diaspora and as long as Jews have migrated from country to country, they have formed their own *Landsmannschaften* for religious worship and for identity purposes. For the refugee, there were even added causal factors.

During the late 1930s and the war years, the Jewish émigré faced the personal and psychological dilemma of having been—in fact, of being—German. In Nazi Europe, he had been degraded and made into a second-class citizen. The forced immigration, with its accompanying loss of status, the psychic blows caused by Nazi propaganda and rejection, the cultural differences between their former background and that of America, and the prejudice, insensitivity and indifference which the American community and even their fellow Jews occasionally displayed, placed a special burden on this group. Moreover, the unfolding story of Nazi brutality in occupied Europe, and the news of the Holocaust produced a deep wound, almost an identity crisis, that made it difficult for the sensitive person who felt himself a Jew to continue to perceive himself as a “German” Jew with a unique past.¹² Here, the synagogues and temples

10. Quoted in Dawidowicz, *Op. cit.*, p. 196.

11. Alexander Carlebach, “The German-Jewish Immigration and its Influence on Synagogue Life in the U.S.A. (1933–1942),” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 9 (1964), pp. 251–272.

12. Herbert Strauss, “The Immigration and Acculturation of the German Jew in the United States of America,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 16 (1971), pp. 63–94; Maurice R. Davie, *Refugees in America* (New York, 1947); S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Absorption of Immigrants* (Glencoe, Ill., 1955); D. Crystal, *The Displaced Person and the Social Agency* (Rochester, 1958); W.G. Niederland, “Psychiatric Disorders Among Persecution Victims,” *Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases*, 139 (1964): 458–474.

established by the refugees provided the important comforts of a familiar cultural and religious milieu, the warmth and support of shared experiences, as well as a "home away from home" which was often embraced with an intensity that itself reveals the underlying insecurity. They provided an atmosphere that preserved their own rites and customs, that recreated the religious services they were used to, and that allowed them to hear sermons preached in the manner and language of Germany. On a more practical level, these synagogues provided employment for rabbis who themselves came as refugees and had difficulties in finding an American pulpit, as well as satisfying a mutual aid function and facilitating a job grapevine. Like all immigrant organizations, these institutions gave the refugee the all-important assurance that he did not have to face his adjustment alone. Here, among his peers, the often galling loss of status was minimized and the cultural shock decreased, as the uprooted immigrants received spiritual support as well as the maintenance of continuity with their traditions and with their past self-image. In religious communion with fellow exiles, they found strength and reassurance in the battle for survival and adaptation.

In New York City, approximately thirty congregations were founded, with an aggregate membership, during the peak years in the early 1950s, of over 10,000.¹³ The majority were established in Washington Heights where many of the refugees resided. What prompted so many of them to move to this area has yet to be determined. Perhaps it was

13. Conference of Jewish Immigrant Congregations Papers, located at the American Federation of Jews from Central Europe Offices. The exact numbers are difficult to determine since some were short-lived, there were occasional mergers and others functioned only during High Holidays. The following are the most important congregations:

American Congregation of Jews from Austria
 American Jewish Congregation
 Congregation Adath Jeshurun of Westbronx, Inc.
 Congregation Adath Machsike Hadath
 Congregation Ahavath Torah of Washington Heights, Inc.
 Congregation Anshe Sholom
 Congregation Beth Hillel of Washington Heights, Inc.
 Congregation B'nai Jakob
 Congregation Chevra Gemiluth Chesed
 Elmhurst Jewish Center
 Congregation Emes Wozedek
 Congregation Habonim, Inc.
 Congregation Kehillath Yaakov
 K'hal Adath Jeshurun
 Congregation Machane Chodosch, Inc.
 Congregation Nodah Biyejudah
 Congregation Ohav Sholaum
 Congregation Ramath Orah
 Congregation Shaare Hatikvah
 Congregation Shaare Tefillah
 Congregation Shaare Zedek of Astoria
 Congregation Tikwoh Chadoshoh
 Congregation Gates of Hope, Inc. Cleveland Heights, Ohio
 Congregation Gemiluth Chassodim, Detroit, Michigan

the inexpensive rents and large apartments that facilitated boarding, or the gentility of the neighborhood, which, along with the style of the buildings, the parks nearby, and the breeze from the Hudson in the evening, carried vague reminders of the residential sections of German cities.¹⁴ Be that as it may, the very nature of such a homogeneous neighborhood tended to keep social and religious relations within the group; hence the preponderance of refugee congregations. Two stand out as representing model types: one Orthodox, the other *Liberalismus* or liberal-Conservative in the American context.

The Orthodox congregation, K'hal Adath Jeshurun, is consciously modeled on what used to be the stronghold of independent, secessionist Orthodoxy in Germany, the *Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft* of Rabbi Samon Raphael Hirsch in Frankfurt am Main. Joseph Breuer, a grandson of the *Religionsgesellschaft's* first rabbi and son of its second one, is the founder of K'hal Adath Jeshurun and continues to be its spiritual inspiration. It was in October, 1938, that a group of about forty refugees sought to establish their own *minyan*, because of dissatisfaction with the religious integrity of existing refugee congregations and the "strangeness" of the American synagogues. For weekly services they rented the ground floor of a small building owned by Yeshiva Soloveichick on West 185th Street. The larger facilities that were needed for Sabbath services were at 183rd Street and St. Nicholas Avenue. Membership grew as people with similar background and predilection arrived, primarily from the small towns and cities of southern Germany, but also from Frankfurt and other *Austritts* (separatist) *Gemeinden* in Berlin, Hamburg and Munich. By March of 1939, it became necessary to move to larger quarters. A building at 90 Bennett Avenue, which had housed a dance studio and the local Republican Club, was initially rented, then purchased outright, and served as the synagogue for the *kehillah* until 1952, when the congregation was able to construct a building of its own nearby. The structure is simple and unassuming in its architectural design, and the synagogue is not distinguished by plush seats, thick carpeting or operatic cantors, although there is a choir. The wooden seats fold, allowing the worshipper to take the required three steps following the *amidah*. The prayers and melodies mostly follow the liturgy and customs practiced in Frankfurt—the *minhag Phaphdam*¹⁵—and the Roedelheim prayer book is used. Worshipers wear hats during all services and most women cover their heads with wigs. On Sabbath and holidays its 1200 seats are almost fully occupied, indicative of the vitality of this synagogue.

When Rabbi Joseph Breuer took over the helm of the congregation in 1939, he came with the concept that a *kehillah* on the European model

14. Ernest Stock, "Washington Heights' 'Fourth Reich,'" *Commentary*, vol. 2, No. 6 (June, 1951).

15. "Phaphdam" is a transliterated acronym from the Hebrew which referred to the city as Frankfurt *de* Main. [R.W.]

should be established—one that would be responsible for, and would maintain, all requisite religious functions and not be merely a *Gebetverein*, a place of worship. A *kehillah* as opposed to a synagogue presupposes an institution providing a multitude of religious services from one central organization. The recipients, rather than being passive congregants, identify strongly with the *kehillah* and use it to govern many aspects of their personal lives. Thus, in K'hal Adath Jeshurun, the rabbi as head of the enterprise, be it Joseph Breuer or his successor, Simon Schwab, receives an ennobled status with the classical overtones of teacher, judge, and *posek* of the final word. His decision is law in this congregation.

The activities of "Breuer's," however, extend far beyond the walls of the synagogue. It is a homogeneous, closely-knit Orthodox Jewish community that contains within its purview all of the religious services and spiritual and social resources necessary for communal Jewish existence. It operates a vast *kashrut* network which includes supervision over the kosher slaughter of meat and poultry, over butcher shops, *mazot*, and a number of bakeries, restaurants and food companies whose products bear the seal of the *kehillah*. It maintains its own ritualarium, burial society, free loan fund and visiting-the-sick societies, and its charity fund distributes many thousands of dollars to organizations, yeshivot, and individuals both within the community and throughout the world. In terms of intellectual advancement, the congregation provides an extensive program of classes for young and old, men and women, and publishes a journal which maintains a high level of Torah scholarship. Its crowning achievement in this area was the foresighted establishment, as early as 1944, of a school system. It is interesting to note that the New York *kehillah*, following the Frankfurt example, always considered the education of youth a major objective. In contradistinction to many other contemporary refugee congregations, they understood that only through a strong educational program and emphasis on the second generation would their future be perpetuated. The system now boasts a kindergarten, an elementary school, a high school, a *mesivta* high school for boys, a Beth Jacob high school for girls, a Beth Hamedrash and the Rika Breuer Teacher's Seminary for Girls. In all of its multifarious activities, the congregation constitutes a conscious effort at substituting the comprehensive *kehillah* concept for the limited pragmatic concept of the synagogue which has its origin in the Anglo-Jewish and American-Jewish communities. Thus, K'hal Adath Jeshurun has reappeared in this country as a phenomenon of historic proportions.¹⁶

That is not to say that there has not been change or transformation. Although in the religious realm "Breuer's" continues the Hirschian re-

16. K'hal Adath Jeshurun's *Mitteilungen*, various editions; Research Foundation for Jewish Immigration Oral History material on "Breuer's"; Dan Landsman, "K'hal Adath Jeshurun, Inc. (A Frankfurt-on-the-Main oriented Kehillah). Its Schools and Institutions." (Unpublished master's thesis, Yeshiva University, 1969); Carlebach, "German-Jewish Immigration," pp. 366-367.

fusal to brook any compromise as a solution to problems arising from the challenge of adherence to Torah in a modern world, and actually has moved somewhat to the right in reaction to the secularism of American society, and although it still remains essentially unaffiliated and autonomous, Americanization has made inroads.¹⁷ English is now the operative language, organizational and financial techniques have been modernized, a sisterhood and old age club have been established, and certain Frankfurt liturgical traditions have been dropped. The *kehillah* has come to realize that it must become politically active and, consequently, it is beginning to cooperate more freely with the other religious communities in Washington Heights in order to protect what they have all built. Without fanfare or publicity it organized a nightly car patrol, for example, to deal with crime in the neighborhood. It has a planning committee that negotiates with city agencies to influence their choice of housing projects, to lobby for better services and to make the city aware of the *kehillah*'s needs. In these and other small ways, it is accommodating to the American environment, while retaining its religious commitment and tradition in a distinctly German-Jewish ambience.¹⁸

Equally successful in a very different fashion is congregation Habonim, which was founded on November 9, 1939, one year after *Kristallnacht*. Just as the inspiration of the "Breuer" congregation was to preserve the Orthodox traditions of Frankfurt, so Habonim ("The Builders") was meant to reflect the great visions of men like Baeck, Buber, Rosenzweig and Max Wiener; it was meant to continue the ideas and ideals of German Liberal Judaism. Its founders—Rabbi Hugo Hahn, George Hirschland, Hans Ben, Gustav Jacoby, Fritz Brodnitz, Eduard Strauss, Fritz Schwarzschild—people who were intellectual and communal leaders of German Jewry, created Habonim with the intention of gathering like-minded liberal Jews who were convinced that their spiritual and cultural heritage was worth cultivating and transmitting to coming generations. From a foundation membership of 25 families, it grew to over 1,000 families and currently has about 850. It was the only major refugee congregation which carried on this liberal tradition in America.¹⁹

Habonim was helped in this endeavor by Jonah Wise's Central Synagogue of New York, on whose premises its services were held during

17. Marc Breuer, Jacob Breuer, eds. *Jubilee Volume Presented in Honor of the Eightieth Birthday of Rabbi Dr. Joseph Breuer* (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1962); Max T. Braunfeld, "A Short History of Agudath Israel in Washington Heights," (Presented at the Occasion of The Annual Dinner of Agudath Israel of Upper Manhattan on March 19, 1972).

18. Yehuda A. Sorscher, "The Kehilla—a Community Stabilizer," *The Jewish Observer*, Vol. 8, No. 7 (September, 1972): 19–21.

19. *Bulletin Congregation Habonim*, Vol. 1, November 1940—Vol. 27, 1965; Bernhard N. Cohn, *Living Legacy: Essays in Honor of Hugo Hahn* (New York, 1963); Research Foundation for Jewish Immigration Oral History material on Habonim; Carlebach, "German-Jewish Immigration," pp. 367–368.

the first six years of existence. At one time, Wise may have entertained the hope that Rabbi Hugo Hahn, formerly of the monumental Reform Temple of Essen, and his German Jews would become a permanent part of Central Synagogue. But the gaps in ideas and practices were too great to be bridged easily. Judaism, Wise's style, was not quite the historic Judaism to which they were accustomed. His services and liturgy were foreign to those habituated to the lushly romantic and fully composed melodies of Lewandowski, Sulzer, Birnbaum and Kirschner. The express intent of these émigrés was to integrate into the American Jewish community without, however, giving up some of the atmosphere and feeling of the German-Jewish religious and liturgical tradition in which they had been nurtured. Accordingly, they established themselves as an independent refugee organization with temporary headquarters at the United Order of True Sisters building on West 85th Street in Manhattan. Later, in 1958, they built their own synagogue on West 66th Street and, since it was not conceived of as a neighborhood synagogue but as an ideological congregation, they established a branch in Elmhurst and a youth center in Rego Park, areas of the borough of Queens where many of the members reside.

From the very beginning, Habonim was more than just a place of worship but was energized by the credo that learning and studying have preserved Jewish thought as a living force and that there can be no authentic Judaism without historical consciousness. It was precisely during the 1920s, when the neo-Kantian Hahn stood at the beginning of his ministry, that he was caught up with, and became an intimate part of, that great intellectual and philosophical ferment in German-Jewish life—that extraordinary epoch which we associate with Rosenzweig, Buber, and Baeck. It was this legacy which helped him in the fashioning of Habonim.

In the early days, Hahn, along with Eduard Strauss, who had had a close relationship with Rosenzweig, Fritz Schwarzschild and, later, Max Wiener, tried to recreate here a Frankfurt *Lehrhaus* tradition in order to perpetuate the great heritage of dynamic Jewish study and thought which was so important in Germany and which, they felt, should be German Jewry's contribution to American Jewish life. The *Lehrhaus* Franz Rosenzweig was established to uphold the cultural standards of the congregation by rediscovering and cultivating the spiritual values of Judaism, and by constructing a living contact with the creative forces of the cultural environment.¹⁸ Although during the course of the first few years men of academic prominence, Christian scholars, writers, artists and philosophers lectured before the congregation and participated in searching discussion sessions, the experiment ultimately failed for lack of membership interest. In the struggle for economic rootage and advancement, in the acculturation to an increasingly leisure-oriented society, and in the acceptance of the sociological mores of American life, many German refugees adapted themselves rapidly and thoroughly to the prevailing

ethos of American values which is neither religious nor intellectually oriented.²⁰ These are only a few of the factors that made the *Lehrhaus* concept less palatable, probably non-transferable. In addition, Max Wiener, who, for a time, was its intellectual voice, was generally not understood. He struggled towards a new image of Jewish religious life akin to the tendencies of the twentieth century. Philosophical rationalism, he argued, had to occupy a more marginal position as compared with the dynamic forces of Jewish nationalism, history and community life. Wiener remained a general without an army.²¹ Moreover, the complexion of American Jewry was beginning to have an impact and this partially explains the absence of that Jewish impetus and self-searching which had characterized the last episode of German life in the 1930s and had given strength and encouragement to many Jews in Germany during that chaotic period. The characteristic ambition of German-Jewish savants to tie their ideological boot securely to one or another anchorage in classical Judaic thought was, and still remains, conspicuously absent in this country. Thus, American synagogues, by and large, celebrate the pragmatic approach (which scandalizes the philosophical purist) in their bold defiance of mere logic, and are short on metaphysics while long on all forms of social service. The synagogue is able to embrace, under its wing, every cultural and recreational interest of the Jewish community, taking on, quite naturally, the role of a synagogue center.²² This homogenizing approach has gradually affected and altered the religious complexion of Habonim.

The development of American Jewry in the last twenty-five years may thus have helped to determine that, today, Congregation Habonim, while still different from Conservative and Reform synagogues in the United States, has found its place somewhere in the middle of the spectrum of religious identity and practice. The rituals have changed to some extent—the Bat Mitzvah has been introduced and women are called to the Torah—new melodies are being used, English has superseded the German language, and many of the external aspects of congregational life have evolved towards a greater similarity to the American-Jewish model. Habonim is now led by a German-born but Hebrew Union College-trained rabbi, and an American-born-and-trained assistant rabbi. The assistant cantor is American, as are the choirmasters. In these ways, the

20. Herbert A. Strauss, "The Immigration and Acculturation of the German Jew in the United States of America," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 16 (1971), pp. 63–94.

21. Hans Liebeschutz, "Max Wiener's Reinterpretation of Liberal Judaism," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 5 (1960), pp. 35–57.

22. Lucy S. Dawidowicz, "Middle-Class Judaism: A Case Study," *Commentary*, Vol. 29, No. 6 (June, 1960): 492–503; Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972); Arnold A. Lasker, "Motivations for Attending High Holy Day Services," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Fall, 1971): 241–48; Charles S. Liebman, "The Religion of American Jews," in Marshall Sklare, ed., *The Jew in American Society* (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1974).

gradual Americanization has begun, and there is even a perceptible native-born element among the membership. Habonim has a brotherhood and sisterhood as well as a young couples' group—typically American features of synagogue life. Business methods and fund raising have been modernized and accommodated to the American example.

Here, then, we have a faithful replica of a German Liberal congregation, consciously striving to preserve the essential characteristics of a religious approach which had been brought to a high level of ideological, functional and administrative efficiency in pre-Hitler Germany and to which the growing persecution, from 1933 onwards, had given greater spiritual and intellectual depth. However, America, over time, has contributed the idea, the details and the impulse for social activities as an integral part of the synagogue function. Habonim's future, unlike "Breuer's," apparently lies in the direction of an accelerating Americanization.

All, or almost all, of the other congregations founded by refugees move between the two poles of the "Breuer" congregation and Habonim. The one exception might be Emes Wozelek of Washington Heights which, under Rabbi Max Koppel, was more typically Reform than Habonim. Primarily, the remainder were founded by Jews from southern Germany and they took on the function and flavor of Judaism as practiced in that pastoral environment. This is not surprising, since the distribution of refugees followed that of earlier waves of Jewish immigration from Germany. Under the stringent immigration laws of the United States, refugees needed affidavits and sponsors. Affiants were usually family or friends and that is why Jewish émigrés in this period originate mainly from southern and western Germany, the geographic locus of the nineteenth century immigration.

In view of the preponderance, among the refugees, of Jews from southern Germany, the tendency was rather in favor of tradition. Those who came from Bavaria, Swabia, Furth, Wurzburg, Regensburg, Augsburg, etc., were steeped in a purely German, predominantly Catholic environment. Their radius of activity was limited, the personal world of the individual and of the community somewhat confined. Religiously, the *praxis* was stamped with the dye of the Middle Ages. Conservative in all things, their ritual persisted practically unaltered under the supremacy of the *minhag*. Reason and justification were buried under centuries of basically uninformed practice. Every town, every district, jealously guarded its own particular rite which was fixed, protected and immutable—a source of continuity. The Orthodoxy of Franconia and Bavaria, although sincere and strict, was devoid of intellectual vitality. Here there was no driving force generated by the proximity of the vibrant Jewry of Poland. There was no deep-rooted urge to study the Talmud as a means of sharpening the wits, as a means, indeed, of understanding their faith. Hasidism had not spread its tentacles so far. These were simple,

mostly unlearned Jews who had never been tempered in the furnace of elevated thought or of ritualistic curiosity. They were content to practice the soulful, if not leisurely, Judaism as handed down by their fathers, and they resisted change. They received comfort and support from age-old liturgy and customs and expected and desired nothing more from their faith. This religious outlook and expectation was brought with them to the United States and to their new congregations which were established, essentially, to recreate the familiarity and cultural milieu of a lost environment and to foster a sense of security and identity, a continuity with past self image.²³

For the refugees, a world had collapsed. Stumbling blocks abounded as they set out to cope with a new society in less than propitious circumstances. Personal and family problems weighed heavily. The language was unfamiliar. Even lowly jobs were initially hard to find. As a result, many yearned for religious roots and spiritual comfort. Established American synagogues were unable to offer these to the mass of émigrés who longed for traditional melodies and accustomed ritual. They hungered after sermons in tune with, and sensitive to, the upheaval that they had undergone, and delivered in a language that they could absorb without difficulty. Thus, immigrants from the same town or region in Germany, with similar religious predilections, gathered together for worship and social relationships. Like all *Landsmannschaften*, these congregations gave the immigrant the knowledge that he was not alone. His mental balance, his integration as a personality and, correspondingly, his ability to take his place in society, depended, to some extent, on his participation in these groups, notwithstanding their provincialism and limited horizons. For the immigrant this was "pluralism," a way station on the road to integration and, hence, an important step in Americanization.

Several of the more than a score émigré congregations that were established indicate a certain typicality of approach and can be presented as examples. Rabbi Ralph Neuhaus' Ohav Sholaum, for instance, was founded in 1940, primarily by Jews from Bavaria. From a nucleus of 35 members, it grew to a peak of over 800 in the late 1950s. The synagogue is officially Orthodox and leans towards the Frankfurt *nusah*, yet the degree of observance of the members varies and the strictly Orthodox are in a minority. Another congregation of similar complexion is Shaare Hatikvah, founded in 1935 by Jews from Wurzburg. Its first rabbi was the late Dr. Hannover, who arrived in 1939 and had previously been the rabbi of the venerable community of Wurzburg in Bavaria. It has recently merged with Ahavath Torah, which was founded in 1938 by Jews from southern Germany.²⁴

23. Yeshayahu Wolfsberg, "Popular Orthodoxy," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 1 (1965), pp. 237-254; Alexander Carlebach, "German-Jewish Immigration," pp. 351-372.

24. Material in the Research Foundation for Jewish Immigration Archival Lists; Oral History Material; Conference of Jewish Immigrant Congregations Papers.

An interesting development is Congregation Beth Hillel of Washington Heights, founded in 1940 by a group of former members of the Munich community and originally led by the Liberal rabbi of Munich, Max Baerwald. A year later they joined a similar group of Nuremberg Jews under their rabbi, Dr. Isaak Heilbronn. From the beginning, the services took on a more Conservative-Orthodox character than that practiced by the main synagogues of either Munich or Nuremberg, which were moderately Reform, in order to satisfy the great number of traditionalist members. Beth Hillel has attempted to coordinate both the traditional and liberal trend into a cohesive synthesis. There are no mixed pews, for example, but no gallery or *meḥizah* either. According to the classification customary in America, Beth Hillel may be considered a Conservative congregation that has moved perceptibly towards the right. This bent was reinforced in 1955 at the retirement of Rabbi Baerwald, and the appointment of Rabbi Hugo Stransky. Stransky's career reflects, in many respects, the best Ashkenazi rabbinical tradition as it has evolved from the late Middle Ages: the interpreter of the law and customs, moral leader of the congregation, preacher, teacher and scholar, and positive influence in the community.²⁵ His emphasis has been on the "essence" of Judaism, its eternal meaning. His congregants, however, have been more interested in the superficial forms and practices of Judaism. Like many of the members of the other refugee congregations, they were generally unreceptive to an existential approach; inner Judaism and religious self-realization are not characteristic of their strivings.

Much the same can be said for those synagogues founded by survivors from the small villages and hamlets of southern and western Germany. Whether it is the Elmhurst Jewish Center (Unsleben), Kehillath Yaakov in Washington Heights (Fuerth and vicinity), or Shaare Tefillah in the Bronx (Hessen), the pattern was repeated. The congregants tried to resurrect, phoenix-like, what they knew "at home" and, in the process, clung tenaciously to their traditions and customs, remaining isolated from the mainstream of American Jewry and resistant to change; all with the utopian view of recreating on American soil what they had cherished in Germany.²⁶ The attempt could not succeed, for, as the actuarial imperatives took their toll, as neighborhoods changed, and as secularism made its impact, it became apparent that the second generation who did not know firsthand the Judaism of their fathers, would not be attracted to this "folk" religion. It is the absence of genuine religious commitment and the preference for empty ceremonialism which may go far to explain the disaffection of some of the best and most sincere elements of the younger generation. Unfortunately, what many of them have accepted instead has not been much of an improvement. The embourgeoisement of American

25. *Bulletin of Congregation Beth Hillel of Washington Heights, 1946-1975*; Wolfsberg *Op. cit.* and Carlebach, "German-Jewish Immigration," p. 388.

26. Wolfsberg, *Op. cit.*

Jewry has touched this group as well, and apathy, nonaffiliation and assimilation have been the results. On the congregational front, the construction of elaborate religious edifices in the suburbs appears to be inversely proportionate to the degree of religious commitment. Expensive weddings and Bar Mizvahs, social functions and dances, have proven to be a poor substitute for faith, and barely conceal the vacuity of much of what passes for religious life in America today. There is, in short, an absence of the religious passion which had always been a hallmark of Judaism.

Certainly, the refugee synagogues cannot be faulted for this development; in fact, their very existence and their slow and tentative moves toward Americanization are evidence of their disapproval of many of these trends. Yet, they failed to make the alternative sufficiently flexible and attractive to keep the youth within the fold. With the exception of "Breuer's," they put little emphasis on the young, did not sufficiently integrate and involve them in the activities of the synagogue, were slow to make accommodations in language and practice, did not recognize the importance of providing their children with more than a cursory Jewish education, and, in essence, built synagogues out of the understandable but selfish motive of self-preservation and camaraderie without the foresight and imagination to plan for the future. This is their most obvious and recognized failure. Granted, they have been affected and transformed, to various degrees, by the American environment, been made more modern and "relevant." But modernism has substituted rationalism and a bland middle class ceremonialism which demand little and, spiritually, offer even less. Gradually, these congregations have revealed the surface manifestations of Americanization, replaced German with English as the operative language, introduced men's clubs, sisterhoods, golden age clubs, luncheons, fund raising, the social function of the synagogue and a more public display of Zionism, while simultaneously retaining the German-Jewish flavor of the services and such intangibles as respect for the rabbi, decorum, formality, punctuality and deference to elders. In their effort to plant their feet firmly in both worlds, however, they have been influenced by what is weak and misdirected in American Jewry while being unable to transcend their own limitations by either recapturing the essence of a German-Jewish renaissance or synthesizing the best of the Old World with the best of the New. Their much discussed isolation failed to immunize them from the forces extant, while it limited their imagination and their ability to respond creatively to the requirements of the age. These synagogues certainly provided a needed spiritual and cultural anchor to a rootless people in flux and should be recognized for this contribution, but they also were unable to develop sufficiently, to expand and legitimate that function. Hence, they grow old and weak along with their patrons.

What conclusions can be drawn, then, concerning the religious expe-

riences of these Nazi victims? Apart from the more or less conscious intention to revive a thousand-year-old tradition of German Judaism which had been more recently energized by the renaissance in the twentieth century, the refugee congregations aimed at finding in common worship, according to familiar rites, tunes and mores, one area in life in which something was preserved of the homeland from which they had been driven. For their own generation they were successful, but they could not transfer these allegiances to their children. In most cases, the disappearance of the older founding generation has led to a decline. In the case of Habonim, although failing in the *Lehrhaus* experiment, it has established a fair replica of Liberal Judaism and has, for a time, succeeded in creating a high level of cultural activities (lectures, discussions, concerts), primarily because of the social and intellectual composition of its membership. But even here, the ferment that fueled the earlier intellectual excitement created by immigration and acculturation, could not be replaced by participation in current Jewish and American intellectual affairs, and was weakened by the need to provide senior citizen programs. In organizational structure, the congregations have taken over the forms used by American synagogues. A congregation like "Breuer's," however, by introducing and expanding the European *kehillah* concept, has exerted a powerful influence on Orthodox circles in spite of, or precisely because of, its "splendid isolation." Against the pragmatic and denominational concept of the American synagogue with its social, club-like overtones, the *kehillah* approach responds with its claim to be a religious microcosm of the Jewish nation, the exilic anticipation of the Kingdom of Israel.

Thus, the religious institutions created by the Jewish émigré from Germany, with this one exception, have entered the maelstrom of assimilation and have been gradually sliding into decline. They have faced the difficult, almost insurmountable, problem of translating their experiences into the language and culture of their Americanized second and third generations and have essentially failed in the attempt. But even if their organizational life spans should be limited, these institutions, nevertheless, form an important chapter in the history of Jewish resilience in the face of uprooting and resettlement. Could these German Jews have perpetuated and passed on their cultural and religious legacy to the second generation by transmitting more than just the personal values and experiences of their past, by being Jewish-German rather than German-Jewish? Possibly yes, but this would have been the first time in American immigration history that a heterogeneous group had succeeded in maintaining its language and culture intact. It is time that we expect less from these German Jews, temper our criticisms with analysis and understand that, like all immigrants, they were affected by social forces that are nondiscriminating. If we do, we might remember that German Jews, although possessing certain economic and educational advantages, were also innocent victims of the Holocaust.

Simple Elements and Violent Combinations: Reflections on the Fiction of Amos Oz

IVAN SANDERS

THE ISRAELI NOVELIST AMOS OZ WRITES about uniquely self-contained worlds; and he seems to be so much at home in each one that one doesn't always realize how often, and with what anxious anticipation, he looks beyond them. The setting of his first novel, *Elsewhere, Perhaps*, is a kibbutz on the Jordanian border—a strip of arduously cultivated land, surrounded by forbidding mountains whose physical harshness is matched only by the hostility of their Arab inhabitants. The European-born members of the border settlement, having gained a foothold in the inhospitable region, take pride in, and are at times complacent about, their self-sufficiency. *Elsewhere, Perhaps* is a chronicle of cozy indiscretions and infidelities in a close-knit kibbutz community. The world of Hannah Gonen, heroine of *My Michael*, is a subjective recreation of lived reality, though in its own way it is as confining as the world of *Elsewhere, Perhaps*. The bored wife of a decent but unexciting Israeli academic, Hannah is given to extravagant daydreams, but her native Jerusalem remains, for her, a brooding, claustrophobic city of narrow alleyways, dank courtyards, massive walls and towers. Even the landscape of her fantasies seems circumscribed: the script and cast of her daydreams vary but little. In the novella, "Crusade," which tells the story of a group of Jerusalem-bound medieval travelers who are propelled by their limitless hatred of Jews, we again sense a special kind of unity, a hermetic wholeness. The perverted spirituality of Count Guillaume of Tournon and his band of desperate crusaders is so overpowering that it permeates the physical landscape, the very elements. As in the novels, the sense of place in "Crusade" evokes an enclosed, autonomous world.

But Oz, as we said, is mindful of larger vistas, and of the uncertainty and terror that they often awaken in the viewer. At the end of *Elsewhere, Perhaps* the somewhat prissy and self-righteous narrator for once gives free rein to his fears and asks: "What are mountains when viewed by the stars? Heaps of shifting dust, here today and gone tomorrow . . .

We cower at the foot of the mountains. What is beyond them? Vast desert plains, twisted canyons at the mercy of dry scorching winds. Anti-Lebanon

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Hauran Golan Bashan Gilead Moab Arnon Edom, a long grim mountain wall. Beyond them there is no enchanted garden. There is a land of lizard viper asp and fox. And beyond that are more mountains, more dreadful than ours, stretching away to the east. Beyond them is the plain of the two rivers, held in the jaws of the mountains. And further beyond, fresh mountain ranges spread to infinity, with peaks of permanent snow severed by knife-gashed valleys, where black goats furiously tear the scrub tended by shepherds as black as they are. And everything is tyrannized by the dread light of a merciless moon. We do not belong here. Our place is in cool shady gardens. But which is the way back?

The anxiety produced by the perception of a threatening world is by no means peculiar to beleaguered kibbutz members. In Oz's most recent work, *Touch the Water, Touch the Wind*, a similar overview on the eve of World War Two evokes images of night and doom in the mind of a Polish university professor.

He could see the damp gray wind howling across the town of M — —, bursting out over wide wintry expanses, stirring the fir forests, screeching at cottage windows. Far away in the distance he could see huts and towers, and beyond them the lights of Warsaw gradually dying away, the swell of the turbid Baltic, night stooping over Berlin, steep ravines darkening in alpine valleys, he could sense the mighty rivers flowing through the dark, Volga, Rhine, darkness on the peaks of the Pyrenees and Apennines, darkness on the northern steppes and the mountains of the Balkans, and over all, bitter and piercing, the howling of steppe wolves at solitary towers.

Touch the Water, Touch the Wind is both playful and grim. Its heroes are Elisha Pomeranz, the son of a watchmaker, who turns out to be a brilliant if cantankerous theorist, and his wife Stefa, who, when we first meet her, is the devoted assistant of the prescient Polish scholar. Pomeranz miraculously escapes from war-torn Poland, and after several years of European peregrinations winds up on an Israeli kibbutz where he antagonizes everyone with his quarrelsome genius. He is ultimately reunited with his wife who arrives in Israel from Russia where she had been—of all things—a high-ranking intelligence officer.

Sharp divisions and contrasts abound in Oz's fiction, yet he also suggests the interrelatedness of all human experience, and invariably expresses a yearning for the coming together of disparate elements. In *Touch the Water, Touch the Wind* this yearning takes the form of a whimsical excursion into the realm of metaphysics and magic. Elisha Pomeranz's scientific breakthrough seems to consist of the discovery that everything possesses the characteristics of its opposite and can, therefore, freely combine with it. The visionary theorist reduces the baffling paradoxes of the mathematical concept of infinity to a simple theorem. We also learn that the marriage of mathematics and music gives rise to a new discipline: "Mathemusics." And one would-be scientist testifies that "here and now, with my very ears, I can hear the stars singing." This same theme of the

attraction of opposites is given psychological credence in *Elsewhere, Perhaps*. When Zechariah Siegfried Berger, a cynical and conniving yored, sees the tortured kibbutz-poet, Reuven Harish, die of a heart attack, he suddenly becomes aware of the motives behind his love-hate for someone who at least tried to live up to his ideals. "Who are you now, pure man?" he asks the dying Reuven. "You're me when I was alive. I love you . . . We were brothers. I loved you very much." But it is in "Crusade" where the notion of the relativity of things and the oneness of nature is expressed most poignantly and with dazzling poetic flair. Towards the end of the tale, Guillaume of Tournon, the thoroughly demoralized and brutalized crusader, has, for a moment, a rare understanding of cosmic imponderables:

His heart told him that this place was strange and that even Jerusalem was not the goal of this journey but of another journey, no journey at all, no City of God . . . for truth is so pure and only the eyes are blind, fire is not fire, snow is not snow, stones are thoughts and the wind is wine and wine is silence, prayers are fingers, pain is a bridge and death is home, is the touch, is the warm tinkling song "You, you, you."

Another, perhaps more basic, reason why Oz often transcends his poetically reinterpreted local realities may have to do with the simple fact that most of his characters are not only Israelis but Jews who have ties and roots in places other than Israel. Even if we examine *My Michael*, considered to be an unusually apolitical, "un-Jewish" novel, we realize that underlying its clashes of personality and values is the impulse either to deny or embrace the givens of the immediate environment. And in one crucial sense it is not Hannah Gonen, the "Israeli Madame Bovary," the unfulfilled wife of a dull geologist, who rejects the world around her, but the conventionally well-adjusted members of her society whose attachment to the new land, no matter how loudly proclaimed, is skin deep, and whose real commitment is still to those practical, portable values that, throughout history, Jews had been taught, the hard way, to treasure. Hannah's totally matter-of-fact acceptance of herself as an Israeli, as well as her very personal relationship with her physical surroundings, enable her, despite her isolation, her wild imaginings, and her boredom, to be more in touch with the land than are many of the supposedly down-to-earth, socially useful people whom she encounters. Hannah becomes a quiet rebel when she stops believing in the supremacy of the mind, when she is no longer impressed with her Michael's admittedly unspectacular, though perfectly respectable, rise in the academic world. She realizes that there are other sources of strength. Her growing indifference to her husband's achievements becomes especially conspicuous when contrasted with the traditional Jewish reverence for learning and intellectualism evinced by some of the older characters in the novel—her own father, for instance, who is awed by the mere sight of a famous professor, her doctor

who regales her with literary *aperçus*, or a neighbor who visits the Gonens regularly to read a page from the *Encyclopaedia Hebraica*. For Hannah, as for Emma Bovary, books become an escape—grist for the mill of her fantasy life. As her story progresses, her intellectual experiences, indeed, all her experiences, are transfigured into flamboyant images of violence and passion. By giving in to her senses, by succumbing—at least in dreams—to an eruptive, all-consuming physicality, Hannah reaffirms her affinity with the basic elements surrounding her, and rejects her husband's world of civilized restraint and moderate excellence. Toward the end of her narrative, she tries, in a frantic effort to enliven her own body, to awaken Michael's dormant sexuality, but he is a reluctant and somewhat bewildered partner; her imploring words illustrate once again Oz's notion of the union of opposites—though here the images suggest total abandon, a loss of the self, something that the sober, sensible Michael cannot even understand, let alone indulge in.

Will we die, Michael, you and I, without touching each other so much as once? Touching. Merging. You don't understand. Losing ourselves in each other. Melting. Fusing. Growing into one another. Helplessly coalescing. I can't explain. Even words are against me . . .

It has been argued that the reason why so many Israelis were disturbed—and fascinated—by Hannah's character is that she seemed to represent a different kind of Israeli: earthbound, languid, uncerebral, "Asiatic," out of step with the achievement-oriented, Western, essentially Jewish world of her husband and his circle. Attractive as such generalizations appear on the surface, they are of dubious value, and especially unjust when made in connection with a novel as rich and complex as *My Michael*. Both Hannah and her husband are very real people, and her potentially rational self, her reserve, even her stiffly formal manner, become as evident as Michael's occasional championing of emotionality. ("One's got to be wild, Hannah," he says at one point. "Sometimes one even has to lose all sense of proportion.") And Hannah, who, by her own admission, has inherited some of her father's enthusiasm for "world-famous" intellectuals, envisions her future husband as a renowned scholar "hovering among piles of old German tomes." (The romantic stereotype is revealing and brings to mind once more Hannah's literary ancestor, Emma Bovary, who indulges in similar fantasies and is disappointed when her country-doctor husband doesn't turn out to be "one of those silent dedicated men who spend their nights immersed in books.")

Just the same, it may not be altogether inappropriate to generalize about the novel's broader implications. Critics of modern Hebrew literature routinely point out that recent Israeli fiction is characterized by introspection and a general disinterest on large, publicly debated issues. Yet we are told, by novelist Dahn Ben Amotz, that Amos Oz is a "terribly" political person whose political themes—because he is also a literary

artist—are “filtered through many, many symbolic screens.”¹ Thus, the story of a sexually frustrated Israeli housewife may, after all, have profound social and political overtones. Israel, for Hannah Gonen, simply *is*; there is nothing provisional, unsettled—or heroic—about it. The crucial events of the day (the time-span covered by her narrative is the decade of the fifties) are mere echoes, minor reenactments of her turbulent inner dramas in which lurid sexual fantasies mingle with childish visions of omnipotence, both mocking her drab sanity. Seen in this light, Aziz and Halil, the Arab twins of her fantasies who either violate her or slavishly submit to her whims, and who in her final apocalyptic vision turn up as deadly terrorists with sure-fire instincts, are handy symbols of brute, reckless strength—a massive, unchanging, *natural* presence in the land. In that final scene, as the two of them move across the desert, bent on destruction, they are shielded by the wilderness itself.

Their movement bowed and curved, like tender saplings swaying in the breeze. Night will clutch and veil and swallow them in his folds. The chirp of crickets. A distant fox's cackle.

The twins are doing Hannah's bidding; but, while trying to gain perfect control over them, she is also anxious to partake of their robust energy. In what is yet another appearance of the fusion-motif, Hannah expresses a desire to “manipulate two lissom twins as though they were extensions of me, left hand and right hand.”

The degree to which the author intended these fantasies to be taken as parts of an actual political allegory is, of course, open to question. But if we juxtapose Hannah's floridly Oriental dreamworld with her day-to-day existence in a Jerusalem that is more like a sombre Eastern European town than a majestic Biblical city, we have brought into focus one of the perennial conflicts of the Israeli experience: the tug of war between European sensibility and Asiatic reality. Hannah is a poignant character because in her the impulse toward greater freedom—a freedom unbounded by time, untroubled by guilt—is checked every time by a restrictive notion of time, a sobering view of life's possibilities. (“Time is like a police van patrolling the streets at night,” she declares at one point.) Her attempts to bridge the gap between her two worlds—in fantasy by incorporating the Arab twins' vital being into her own self, and in reality by teaching her little boy that strong isn't the opposite of sensible—are doomed to failure, if only because the intellectual and ethical tradition that molded her prides itself in keeping under control the very desires which reign supreme in her dreamworld. By concentrating on the plight of a sensuous woman, Amos Oz is, in effect, pointing to the paucity of that tradition. Indeed, in his other works he is even more skeptical about the possibilities of reconciling the European heritage with present-day Israeli needs. In *Touch the Water, Touch the Wind*, for instance, the novel's wander-

1. *Publishers Weekly*, June 7, 1971: 31.

ing heroes finally come to rest in Israel, but not before fusing, quite literally, with the soil. The self-consciously surrealist closing scene of the novel, in which Elisha Pomeranz and his wife sink blissfully into a vaginal-like slit in the ground, can be easily seen as a provocatively explicit rejection of ratiocination and an eager yielding to primitive matter.

The clash between the gifts of the past and the demands of the present can also be found in *Elsewhere, Perhaps*, which is described by the author as a story of the older generation of Israelis who came as refugees from Germany and Russia and still carry on a "disappointed love affair" with their homelands.² Oz not only brings to light the unacknowledged nostalgia of these immigrants, he also ridicules—gently, wisely—their belief that a complete cultural and emotional reorientation is possible. In the late thirties, the enthusiastic founders of kibbutz Meẓudat Ram dreamed of a new world and frowned on the pathos of the European Jewish experience, on "ghetto poems" and "ghetto themes." They were, and remained, proud Jewish peasants, believing that "we must never give in over land. Land is the most important thing in the world." Yet, whenever the word "peasant" is used in connection with the kibbutzniks, we are made to feel the irony of the label. When the seventeen-year-old daughter of one of the founders becomes pregnant, the narrator is tempted to dismiss the affair by saying: "A peasant girl is going to have a bastard child, that's all." But he knows and we know that it's not quite that simple. The older members, many of them children of cultured Europeans, are not—cannot be—"peasants." "You will hardly find among them the typical peasant face, with that dense, closed look which comes from grinding toil. On the contrary. In their faces, and in their gait, as well, you see the signs of a lively intellect." As they grow older, the European refugees realize with dismay that they have not really struck roots in the new land. "A man born in the gentle light of northern climes can never resign himself to the stark bright glare of this country." There is also a sense in which they became strangers to their own, native-born children who are far less reflective and imaginative than their parents. While watching the lithe bodies of the young on the kibbutz basketball court, the unnamed narrator, obviously an older member, muses with melancholy:

Here it is muscles and lungs and deadly cunning that win the day. Gleaming bodies weaving a narrow passage. Quick wits and powerful vitality. Razor-sharp reaction. That is what counts here. Perfect control of every sinew and fiber. We are not fond of this place. We are lovers of words. Our responses are too slow.

The problem is not simply a generation gap. Oz complicates the predicament of the founding members by introducing a character who, though in some ways despicable, illuminates for them the precariousness

2. *Publishers Weekly*, May 21, 1973: 17.

of their situation. Zechariah Siegfried Berger, like his kibbutznik brother, Ezra, was born in Germany and left for Palestine in the thirties. However, he returned after the war and became a rich night-club owner in Munich. A worldly, cynical man, he visits Meẓudat Ram only, it seems, to show off his wealth and to stir up trouble. He tries to persuade Noga Harish, the young girl who is carrying Ezra's child, to return with him to Munich, where Noga's mother lives with *her* lover. (It is to humiliate her father, who found consolation in a rather sedate affair with Ezra's wife, that Noga seduced the taciturn Ezra. Oz, for all his literary sophistication, is not averse to soap-opera twists.) Siegfried is perhaps the most interesting character in the novel, the only one who understands Noga, her defiant sexuality, her assertion that "she belongs to the mountain." The rest of the kibbutz is puzzled and somewhat frightened by her behavior. "Like the woman in *My Michael*," writes Paul Zweig in his review of the novel, "Meẓudat Ram must fend off thrusts from the primitive land which hems it in, only to find that the land has an ally in the shadowy world of the emotions."³ Siegfried is sophisticated enough to understand Noga's unconscious longings and cynical enough to disregard the promptings of his own conscience. He is excited by the quasi-incestuous nature of Noga's affair with his brother, and openly mocks the conventional marital bliss of Tomer, Ezra's brawny son. The confrontation between uncle and nephew reveals the ambiguity of Siegfried's corruption and the dullness of Tomer's decency. Tomer sees his father's brother as a menace, and is too self-conscious and obtuse to notice that he is also a man of subtlety and insight. "Anyone who never stoops is not a man," Siegfried tells his uncomprehending sabra nephew. The visitor from Munich may be a manipulator, a tempter, but his machinations could also be seen as *his* way of trying to reconcile opposites. When his exasperated sister-in-law tells him "You find it so easy to argue black into white," he answers: "I'm colorblind, my dear. Colors just run riot in front of my eyes."

For the characters of *Touch the Water*, *Touch the Wind* the European past is also both burden and blessing. The novel's watchmakers, scientists and commissars pine for the Promised Land, but, once in Israel, they realize that, for all of their admired experience and erudition, they are misfits with useless old-world habits. Like Oz's other characters they are forever on the run, fleeing persecutions and private demons, searching for new havens, new horizons. In these stylized, poeticized (often over-poeticized) narratives the escapes are always symbolic, the quests mythic; yet the author manages to retain his historical perspective, his sensitivity to social reality. He may yearn for universal harmony, a magical blending of opposites, but he knows that the real world is made of "simple elements and violent combinations," and that some opposites (flesh and spirit, past and present, fantasy and reality, Jew and Gentile) are irreconcilable.

3. New York Times, November 18, 1973, p. 5.

Zionism and Ideology: The Breira Controversy

JACQUES KORNBERG

BREIRA IS AN AMERICAN-JEWISH ORGANIZATION founded shortly before the Yom Kippur war in 1973. By the spring of 1977 it had a national membership of about 1,200. It has stirred enormous internal controversy in the American Jewish community, and in what follows I will present a brief sketch of Breira and plumb the significance of the controversy that it has evoked.

The period spanning late 1976 and early 1977, when energetic attacks were first launched against Breira, may turn out to have been a watershed in contemporary American Jewish life. These attacks were signs of a new ideological polarisation, suddenly come to haunt the American Jewish community, an internal split whose origins go back to 1967 and the outcome of the Six-Day War. Breira is itself a manifestation of this split.

The crossfire directed against Breira was launched by organizations solidly in the Jewish mainstream: the Zionist Organization of America, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington—as well as large segments of the Jewish press. Breira was accused of being insidiously anti-Israel and pro-PLO, while flying the flag of love of Israel. In early 1977, Professor Rael Jean Isaac, an American academic, wrote a strong anti-Breira polemic called “Breira: Counsel for Judaism,” that was widely circulated and widely read. In April of 1977, *Commentary*—a prominent intellectual Jewish journal of North America—featured an article by Joseph Shattan entitled “Why Breira?” Shattan’s piece was extremely critical. In the same month, *Midstream*—a prestigious Zionist journal—published an attack by the team of Professor Rael Jean Isaac and Erich Isaac, called “The Rabbis of Breira.”

The American Jewish community is no monolith: leading figures in it denounced attacks on Breira as hysterical, indeed “McCarthyite.” Protests were made by Rabbi Joachim Prinz, Chairman of the World Council of Jewish Organizations, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, Chairman of the Conference of Major Jewish Organizations, and others. It was evident, however, that Breira had aroused deep apprehension among American Jews, and that it had become a piece of history by existing in the eye of a storm.

Breira is a new Jewish liberal-radical coalition meant to restore the

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centre-left to power and influence in the Jewish community. Up to now, Breira has been a relatively broadly-based coalition, though the National Platform adopted by its first Membership Conference in February 1977 will probably drive out its far-left elements. Breira's younger members—and older ones, too—were schooled in the politics of protest of the 60s and 70s. Hence, some have had familiar labels applied to them—denizens of the New Left, Third World radicals—that are meant to dispense with analysis rather than to evoke thought. The protest movement of the 60s and 70s was extraordinarily wide-ranging, comprising civil rights pacifists wedded to the political style of Martin Luther King; a Jewish counterculture that renewed Jewish piety and fellowship through the *havurah* movement; and liberals and radicals—some unqualifiedly, some with nuance and reservation—sympathetic to the new “Proletariat” of the Third World, while condemning “Western Imperialism.” Not all those who condemned the policies of the West stopped treasuring Western democracy or made a cult of Third World virtues, though some did. Breira members reflect the political spectrum outlined above.

The Breira coalition includes secularists and religious Jews—a mix of Conservative and Reform rabbis, professionals from the Jewish communal structure, radical activists, professors and graduate students. Scanning fashions and faces at the February Conference—suits and ties, jeans and berets, scraggly beards, the many *yarmulkas*, women in jeans and khakis, others in smart suits or dresses—it is not hard to convince oneself that a new mix, of an unpredictable chemistry, has been created here. This alliance between religiously observant Jews, universalistic and outward looking, and Jewish secularists, unembarrassed by Jewish particularism and distinctively Jewish concerns, is a fascinating piece of historic novelty. To all this must be added a strong feminist presence, ensuring that Breira not be a school in intellectual deference for its female members.

The center-left voice seemed to be firmly in the majority at the Conference. The barrage of attacks against Breira, immediately preceding the Conference, may have strengthened the authority of these moderates, though it seemed to me that they had always constituted a firm majority in Breira. Several instances of a tug of war between radicals and left-liberals demonstrated the preponderance of the latter: At a panel on the social gap between Ashkenazi and Sefardi Jews in Israel, several in the audience wished to introduce the term “racism” to describe the treatment of Sefardim. This was widely rejected as extravagant, distorting and sloganeering. At a committee meeting to draft a statement of principles on Israel-Diaspora relations, an interesting quarrel developed over the wording of a statement about Israel. The final one, endorsed by a large majority, reads: “We love Israel. We cherish the cultural treasures and the many moral examples it has given us.” Someone had proposed, instead: “some of the moral examples it has given us,” implying that Israel, since

1948, had betrayed its promise and lost a good deal of moral credit. Someone else proposed: "many of the moral examples it has given us"—as a compromise formulation. The final statement won easily. At the deliberations of this same committee, a quarrel developed over a statement about the United Jewish Appeal. Some wished for a general denunciation of bureaucracy, coupled with a call for "participatory democracy" in the UJA. Again, the majority was satisfied with a call for accountability, a demand that the books be open, that the destination of UJA monies be public knowledge. All of this hardly constitutes a call to the barricades. The question is whether there is room for this degree of dissent within the American Jewish community.

II

Breira's origins go back to the new issues and dilemmas posed for Zionism in the aftermath of the Six-Day War. The Six-Day War and its outcome, the occupation of the West Bank and of the Gaza strip, with their Palestinian population of about one million, engendered a crisis of identity among Zionists. During the 50s and most of the 60s, Israel's frontiers, based upon the 1949 armistice lines, had gained wide international acceptance, in spite of the continued Arab refusal to recognize Israel's legitimacy. Most important, these boundaries were sheltered by a virtually unanimous Jewish consensus. Moreover, after the great achievements of the early and mid-50s—the absorption of a vast non-Zionist, Near-Eastern Jewish population—the Jewish State had settled into normalcy. Israel had become a great success story, with problems that were just the obverse side of its achievements.

Indeed, between the late 50s and the mid-60s the spiritual fascination that Israel had cast over world Jewry began to dim. In the early 50s economic differentials in Israel were the most equal of any Western society, but by the late 50s, precisely because of rising consumption, they widened rapidly. Moreover, the habit of rule was compromising Zionism. Heroic pioneers had become a ruling elite, clinging tenaciously to power. Amos Elon, in *The Israelis*, tells us that in the first Israeli Knesset the average age of MPs was forty-three; twenty years later, in the sixth Knesset, the average age was sixty-three. Former rebels had become mandarins; former bohemians out to conquer themselves for an ideal, had become an "old guard." The kibbutzim had begun to diversify, create export industries, employ hired labour. The "new man" of Zionist ideology began to look more and more like the "old man" of bourgeois "possessive individualism." The term Zionist in Israel came to be associated with empty rhetoric, patriotic oratory. In Max Weber's phrase, "the routinization of charisma" had begun. But if the honeymoon was over, the reality of the morning after was not half bad. Israel was coping with the problems of a modern industrial society with intelligence and enterprise.

The dazzling success of the Six-Day War altered everything. In an Israel saddled with expanded borders and an occupation, beset by increased Arab intransigence and hostility, fundamental questions about the vocation of Zionism began to be raised. The prospect of a lengthy occupation and a protracted period of belligerence evoked new thoughts regarding the character of the Zionist enterprise. Was Israel to preserve its preponderantly Jewish ethnic character? How large was Israel to be; how small? Was Israel to be a humdrum Switzerland, or was it to exert dominion over a large subject population? How secular was Israel to be? How religious? How far should it exercise a Jewish vocation?

Paradoxically, after the Six-Day War, Israel again began to exert enormous spiritual fascination among Diaspora Jews. In the very first hours of that war, before the tide of battle was clear, many Jews, often with startled awareness, had come to see how much they shared a common fate with Israel, how much their own sense of being active subjects, rather than passive objects, of history was intertwined with Israel's survival.

Fascination with Israel did not centre upon the old Zionist socialist mainstream; figures like A.D. Gordon, Ber Borochov, Nahman Syrkin had become shadowy and obscure monuments. Jews, both secular and religious, resonated to the formulas of Herzl and Jabotinsky, ideologists of political Zionism. It was as a haven from anti-Semitism, meant to exorcise the terrible ghosts of Jewish helplessness and isolation, that Israel stirred Jewish hearts. The Six-Day War, a triumph of military technology in an Israel that had long since dispensed with pioneer watchmen and marching farmers, evoked memories of frightened Jewish children, helpless before German killers. It was Jabotinsky's sense of Zionism as a massive rescue operation that evoked echoes in Diaspora Jewry.

Partly because Israel continued to be menaced by its Arab foes, partly because the Holocaust has traumatised Jews, impelling them to continually relive their awful history, the drama of threatened annihilation and Jewish prowess constituted Diaspora Jewry's main link to Israel. This meant that the Jabotinsky mythology of last-ditch resistance—Modin and the Maccabees, Masada and the Zealot resistance—became pervasive. The sense of living on the edge of fatal annihilation clearly influenced world Jewry's public mood; it reawakened a haunting sense of Jewish isolation. In this situation Israel could only rely on its own might, and on the Lord.

Paralleling these developments, the new situation created by Israel's victory in 1967 caused a marked shift in the balance of power between secular and religious Zionism. Perhaps no event of the Six-Day War exhilarated Jews—both secular and religious—more than the capture of the Western Wall. One of the most striking phenomena of the post-1967 era is, indeed, the intensified hold of religious myth and symbol upon secular Jews. The time had long since passed when socialist Jews paraded to the Western Wall on the Day of Atonement ostentatiously munching ham sandwiches (Amos Elon recounts this incident in *The Israelis*). Aḥad

Ha-am's and even Weizmann's distaste for Jerusalem as the home of Jewish fanaticism no longer formed part of Jewish sensitivities. If secular Jews found themselves deeply touched by these new developments, many religious Jews found themselves, for the first time, at the very centre of things.

Before the founding of the Jewish state the religious Zionists—Mizrachi—were modest foot soldiers in the Zionist enterprise. They had made some mark on questions of religion and education, but political, social and economic policy was firmly in the hands of the secular Zionists. Their great ideologist, Rabbi Kook, occupied a small, though respectable, place among the theoreticians of Zionism, nowhere approaching the importance of figures such as A.D. Gordon or Ahad Ha-am. After 1967, religious Zionism emerged as a significant political force, hardened by an impressive ideological stamina and a clear sense of political direction. As it turned out, the religious educational system had been much more successful than the secular one in fostering a strong sense of values among the first generation of Israelis. While secular Zionists seemed to be grappling confusedly with their ideological inheritance, many religious Zionists began to mark out new positions, staking a claim to be the authentic heirs of the Zionist mainstream.

Saddled with a large Arab population, but tempted by the seeming security of Israel's extended frontiers, many Jews wishfully—in a telling phrase—seemed to harken for the dowry without the bride! The Zionist mainstream, which had scrupulously avoided building a traditional colonialist economy resting upon cheap Arab labour, and which had no principled position on how much of Palestine a Jewish state would have to encompass, had no ideological certainties for the post-1967 reality.

Religious Zionists, at least those sympathetic to the new Gush Emunim movement, evoking a religious conception of the redemption of the land-made-holy because the God of history had revealed Himself there and nowhere else, were guided by new ideological certainties. In the earlier Zionist doctrine it was not so much the land that was to be redeemed as the person—the Jewish urbanite and huckster—made whole by manual labour and a restored sense of unity with nature. The post-1967 notion that the task of Zionism was to redeem a land made holy by the Biblical promise recharged the mystique of Zionism. It again took on the shape of a personally transformative ideology, offering “wholeness,” redemption, creating a “new Jew.”

These developments in Israel were hardly monolithic ones, and Israel continued to be characterized by ideological pluralism; but, subtly, the terms of the debate began to move toward the political right. This was also true among the North American Jews where the rhetoric of Jabotinsky and religious Zionism staked an increasing claim to set the terms of the debate and discussion.

Some of these developments followed from the exigencies of state-

making.¹ Having welcomed a mass immigration of Jews from Arab lands, Israel proceeded to make a nation out of a disparate population. Policy was also controlled by Israel's need for the solidarity and political support of Western Jews. This entailed a subtle alteration in the Zionist canon. The classic Zionist texts were, by and large, products of the Eastern European Jewish Enlightenment. They were the documents of an enormously creative Jewish encounter with modernity, detailing the passionate quest for Jewish possibilities by secular intellectuals for whom belief in the authority of the Torah had become impossible. Zionism was meant to regenerate Judaism, rescuing it from two grim prospects brought on by the crisis of modernity: from becoming a fundamentalist and obscurantist religious sect or, an opposite prospect, becoming but a name, emptied of particular content, an empty bottle, into which Jews poured the wine of European rationalism and humanism. Moreover, Zionist texts breathed the ideological atmosphere of late nineteenth century Russia, its mood of eschatological expectancy and Utopian possibilities, as secular intellectuals rankled at the oppressive Tsarist regime.

Such heady stuff was hardly appropriate to a traditionalist Oriental Jewish population that had not yet passed through its Age of Enlightenment. American Jews, too, were strange to the ideological milieu of Zionism. Two needs, thus, converged: the Israeli State had to create a nation out of a mix of Jews coming from widely disparate cultures; ideological links with Western Jewry had to be maintained. These needs converged into a new emphasis upon Biblical history, the common cultural root of all Jewry, as the fount of the Jewish State's legitimation. Biblical history has been, of course, an anchor of Jewish cultural creativity, a fertile source of ever-changing interpretations of the Jewish vocation. As such, Biblical history is always mediated by interpretation, filtered through the doctrines of a Rabbinic Judaism or of an *Aḥad Ha-am*. What has Biblical Judaism become for largely secular western Jews in its new post-1967 embodiment? It has brought to the fore an enormous superstructure of symbol and mystique. By evoking common historic memories it has affirmed, at least superficially, world Jewry's sense of community. But, for most Jews, who are secular, it has not helped clarify—nor restored—a sense of direction to their understanding of the Jewish vocation. It has blanketed Jews with the rhetoric of community, but has not helped to define the meaning of Jewish peoplehood in terms relevant to modernist sensitivities. On the other hand, the new emphasis upon Biblical sources has helped erode the self-confidence of secular Zionism, and given a new authority and legitimacy to the religious right. The uneasy marriage of politics and metaphysics, absolutizing political claims on the basis of Biblical authority, an enterprise formerly reserved by mystics and fanatics, has attained a new respectability.

1. For this analysis, see Noah Lucas, *A Modern History of Israel*, chapter 17.

Biblical legitimization may help give Israelis the ideological stamina to hold the West Bank at a time when giving it up seems a security danger. American Jews will become increasingly uneasy with this new vocabulary if it goes beyond the stage of rhetoric and gets translated into political action. The American Jewish perception of Israel is still largely controlled by liberal Western values. *Their* Israel is a mirror-image of American progressivism: liberal and secular, the model of a welfare state, a society boldly engaged upon the conquest of nature. It is difficult to tell how hard or soft American Jewish support for Israel will be when tested by the policies of a Likud regime. Will the memory of Jewish martyrdom and evocations of the Biblical covenant be enough to hold their passionate concern?

The logic of events, since 1967, has again forced the question of the meaning of Zionism to the forefront of debate. Israel's stunning victory and its consequences have unleashed new political forces and brought the unhappy beginnings of ideological polarisation to Jewish life, both in Israel and the Diaspora. Seen in the light of developments since 1967, the emergence of Breira represents an aggressive attempt by Jews on the left to inject—or reintroduce—their vision of Israel into the contemporary debate. Contrary to the claims of Professor Isaac and Dr. Shattan, Breira is not made up of Jews who wish to rid themselves of the burden of Israel; they wish, instead, to engage themselves in the debate about Zionist fundamentals, involving themselves, deeply and passionately, in the common destiny that links Israel and Diaspora Jewry. Breira's massive effort to stake out a "dovish" position on Israeli foreign policy stems from the desperate perception that if withdrawal from the West Bank becomes a distant prospect and Israel becomes more and more mired in the occupation, the political right will gain ever-increasing power and authority. History is littered with the remains of tentative arrangements become permanent. As events unfold—riots, terrorism in the West Bank—moderates will begin to look timid and extremists will carry the day. Those with ideological certainties will direct events. The Rabin government considered the West Bank a bargaining card. Now, the terms Judea and Samaria are used with increasing frequency. How long before Zionism means redeeming these lands? At stake may be a fundamental alteration in the principles and policies of mainstream Zionism. Breira is a response to this situation; it has not created it.

III

Breira very quickly became an issue in American Jewish life. It had publicly criticized the policies of the Israeli government, and apportioned to Israel a share of blame for the impasse in the Middle East. It was for this that Breira was mainly condemned, for its public criticism of Israeli government policies.

The position that Breira had identified itself with was that of the Israel Council for Israeli-Palestine peace. Israel was to announce its readiness to negotiate with the PLO about a West Bank state, if the PLO were prepared to recognize Israel's legitimacy and the Zionist character of the state. As Matti Peled and Lova Eliav—leading figures in the Council—articulated this formula, it was to include staged withdrawals, demilitarized zones, mutual inspection and “real peace”—full diplomatic relations, not merely an end to the state of belligerency between Israel and the Arabs. There was nothing in the formula about unilateral withdrawal or disarmament and Peled emphasized the importance of Israel's maximum military preparedness. The Council's position was based upon the following premises:

1. The West Bank could be returned without increasing the danger to Israel's security. Modern technology made inspection of demilitarized zones feasible and violations detectable.
2. The Palestinian issue had become the nub of the Arab-Israeli conflict and gave enormous leverage to the radicals in the Arab world. The Arab states wished to divest themselves of the Palestinian problem.
3. The PLO was divided between radicals and moderates; the latter had reconciled themselves to the Jewish state. Israel's announced readiness to negotiate would strengthen the hand of the moderates.
4. A West Bank state was viable, and would entail a “psychological breakthrough.” Possessed of a state, Palestinians whose homes had been within Israel's 1949 borders would no longer feel homeless and would abandon the dream of return.
5. Real intentions would surface at the negotiating table. If the Arabs were not prepared to grant Israel adequate guarantees for its security, negotiations would break down, and Arab intransigence would be exposed.
6. The risks involved in allowing the conflict to continue were greater than the risks involved in embarking upon a new policy.

These arguments were open to serious question, and what was perhaps most open to criticism was the high degree of certainty enunciated by both the Council and Breira about matters that seemed more speculative than certain. But all policies are a gamble, the future is not easily predictable, and quarrels about policy involve differing perceptions about where the greatest risk lies.

The Council's platform had demanded a quid pro quo from the Arabs—recognition of the Jewish State and its Zionist character—that would have been exceedingly difficult to deliver unless large elements in the Arab world were seriously interested in peace. These issues are more than symbolic; they are part of the stuff of internal political manoeuvre. Peled was throwing a challenge to the PLO. Was it politically possible for the leadership to proclaim its acceptance of the Jewish state without being

outflanked within its own ranks? The Council—and Breira—could hardly be open to the charge of treason.

It was the public criticism of Israel, however, that aroused the greatest indignation in the Jewish community. Breira was branded as “anti-Israel” and “pro-PLO.” Two rather more sophisticated charges were made that are worth considering:

1. By criticising the Israeli government, Breira served the Arab goal of depicting Israel as the cause of the impasse in the Middle East, thus enhancing the image of Arab moderation. All of this was an Arab tactic, meant to prod the West into pressuring Israel into unilateral concessions.
2. Criticism of the Israeli government should be enunciated privately rather than publicly, for public criticism provides ammunition for the enemies of Israel. Arthur Hertzberg, the distinguished head of the American Jewish Congress, has made this argument. He recalls that, after deploring the wretched economic condition of Oriental Jews in Israel, he heard Mr. Baroody, Saudi Arabian delegate to the UN, quote him in a speech condemning Israel. Therefore, the imperative must be: don't provide quotations for Mr. Baroody! Simcha Dinitz, Israeli Ambassador to the United States, insisted that the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* not be the first channel of dispute between American Jews and Israel. Public criticism, it was argued, can only erode support for Israel and demoralise the friends of Israel by dramatising the evidences of disunity.

There is no question that public criticism provides evidence of internal disunity, thereby weakening North American Jewry's political posture. But here we are simply reaping the consequences of Israeli policy. Having once politicised North American Jewry on its behalf, the Israeli government cannot expect that political support to speak with one voice. As Leon Sheleff has argued: Uncritical support for Israel is not a neutral political act, but a factor in its internal politics, employed as such by Israel's politicians. Support strengthens the ruling coalition's hand, builds up its armor of self-assurance, shelters it against internal criticism.² Increasingly, many Jews will refuse to allow themselves to be used in this way. The argument, moreover, can easily become absurd, and can blanket any and all public criticism of the actions or policies of the Israeli government, on the theory that criticism aids the enemy.

These arguments against Breira reveal how far to the political right the rhetoric of support for Israel has moved in these past ten years. This shift in the political tone of support for Israel has given a historical mandate to the right to set the terms of the debate and to define who is a good Zionist. To see the truth of this assertion one has only to turn the argument back upon its propagators and require that they apply it univer-

2. Leon Sheleff, “Response from an Israeli Dissenter,” *Women's American Ort Reporter*, May/June 1977.

sally. We should then have enacted equally powerful sanctions against criticism of the Israeli Government from the right. This criticism, too, feeds the Arab posture of moderation, for it exposes the extremism and intransigence of a large sector of Jewish opinion. American supporters of Gush Emunim, claiming the whole of the West Bank for Israel, have never been asked to keep their views quiet, lest they encourage a distorted picture of Israeli intransigence and Arab moderation. They are assumed to be good Zionists, mistaken perhaps, but with every right to express their concerns. As Irving Howe has said: while “hawkish” views can feel free to express themselves through newspaper ads, doves are to be limited to whispers in the ambassadorial ear. If Mr. Baroody could use Arthur Hertzberg’s criticisms against Israel, “hawkish” statements can be used, just as well, to paint an extravagant and distorted picture of Israeli intransigence and repressiveness.

Those who argue that the public articulation of certain political views can be used by the enemies of Israel are obviously arguing from a specific political position. They believe that these views will erode Israel’s political support. However, they often do not see the issue as one of clashing political judgments. For them, there are no uncertainties. Forsaking the arena where ideas and analysis expose themselves boldly to public debate, they would impose ideological purity on others, charging that disagreement with them is a danger to Israel. What we are witnessing is an aggressive attempt on the part of some Jews to impose their ideological will on other Jews. Crudely executed, the attempt takes the form of impugning their love for Israel and concern for her security. As Professor Rael Isaac has charged: some Jews, “self-haters,” view Israel as an embarrassment. Israel gets in the way of their desire quietly to bury their Jewishness, effected by joining causes they define as “universalistic,” thus eminently worthy of their support—the struggle of the “Proletariat” of the Third World, for example. Demanding from Israel a moral purity which they do not demand of the Third World, these Jews are seeking excuses to abandon Israel. This sort of charge leads nowhere. We all would like to delegitimise the views of others, employing one expedient or another. We all, in our heart of hearts, would like censorship, provided *we* become the censors.

In late 1976, two meetings were held between American Jews and members of the PLO, in which some high-ranking Breira members participated. These meetings were, by mutual agreement, to be private and unpublicized. News of one meeting in Washington was leaked by someone in the Israeli Embassy, after the participants sent the embassy a private memorandum on the outcome of the meeting. As a result, Breira was accused of legitimising the murderers of Jewish children, and letting itself be used to create a propaganda image of PLO moderation and conciliation. Here, again, the argument conceals a particular political stance. The principle of not meeting with terrorists would cripple political dialogue.

Unfortunately, it is possible to talk of the terms of peace only with one's enemies. What is important is not that such meetings were held, but *what was talked about*. Did the participants talk about how to plant bombs in Israel, or did they probe mutual intentions, how far each side was prepared to go in speaking to the concerns of their foes? Was the propaganda victory a PLO one? Or can one argue that this instance of Jewish openness to dialogue helped feed the image of Jewish moderation and reasonableness?

Another argument, crystallized around Breira, and dramatised by the meeting with PLO representatives, is worth considering. It is the argument about unequal risk. Jews in the Diaspora, not themselves exposed to the risks of the battlefield, should respect Israeli policy, made by those whose lives are in the balance. It is, we may all agree, the height of moral inauthenticity to make decisions whose consequences will be borne by others. What is noteworthy is that this argument should surface only now. For years, armchair strategists have been telling Israelis what to do—to reject the Sinai accords, the Golan disengagement, to settle the West Bank—somehow untainted by the charge of arguing from a position of unequal risk. Moreover, when we say that we must honour the lead of those whose lives are in the balance, which Israelis are we speaking of? If another war should come, death will make no distinction between “hawks” and “doves.” Both the supporters of Matti Peled and of Gush Emunim will be exposed to the same terrible prospect. Whose lead shall we follow? The argument of unequal risk is not to be dismissed, though, for it contains an important truth. Those who would enter the public debate about Israeli policy do so at the risk of enormous hypocrisy if they do not do it thoughtfully, responsibly, in fear and trembling, and in the passionate knowledge that their fate as Jews is intertwined with Israel.

The reaction on the part of some Jews to Jews meeting with PLO representatives, particularly the Paris meetings with Matti Peled and other Israelis, can be read as a revealing insight into political perceptions. There are those who believe that the PLO engineered these talks with prominent Israelis as part of the systematic propaganda campaign to present a moderate face to the world, and that these talks achieved just this purpose. Such an analysis confers more credit on the PLO than they deserve. It assumes that they are a closely knit monolith, supremely in control of their long-range political strategy, imperiously in control of events. We, on the other hand, are once again passive subjects of history, helpless before the armed foe, like that beautiful Jewish boy, his face terrified, his hands high before a German rifle in Warsaw. But we are no longer passive subjects of history, caught in a hopeless situation, able to do nothing—absolutely nothing—to prevent systematic, total mass murder. This time we possess armed might, the resources of a state, room for strategy and manoeuvre. Why not assume that the Paris talks weakened the PLO? They, too, can be subjects, victims, of history. Interestingly

enough, the Paris talks were never acknowledged by the PLO, a possible sign of division in their ranks. Indeed, such meetings—bringing Palestinians together with Israelis who believe that historic Palestine is the home of both their peoples—may well have the effect of exacerbating internal differences in the PLO. What about the effect on the PLO of talks with Israelis and Israel's supporters? Having met the most "dovish" of Israelis, those considered pariahs by some of their own countrymen, the PLO faced people who insisted upon the Zionist character of Israel, affirmed its links with world Jewry and demanded exacting guarantees for Israel's security. Whatever effect this might have had on the PLO, it would be a mistake to confer a kind of omniscience and omnipotence on their actions. Such an attitude is the end of diplomacy, it limits options, cramps room for manoeuvre, closes awareness to new possibilities.

Faced with threats to its existence, Israel needs world Jewry, united on its side. Hence, Jews must deal tolerantly with their ideological differences, respecting disagreement, keeping avenues to communication open. Ideological differences must not foster a dialogue of the deaf. What we must avoid is the hardening of sides, an ideological polarisation that would only benefit extremists on the right and left. The terms of the debate must not be set by those who have appointed themselves keepers of the ideological purity of their fellows. It is here that the danger lies, among those who would rupture a powerful unity-in-diversity, the only feasible basis of concord among Jews. Purges in the name of solidarity, heresy hunting in the name of unity, are our most immediate danger.

The attack on Breira has been launched, in part, by those staking out a claim for right-wing Zionism as the only reliable protector of Israel's fate. Too long have Jews immolated themselves, Professor Isaac suggests, for the sake of others. Jews must care, first of all, for themselves. Only those uncompromised by universalism can do so. Such a view is innocent of fine distinctions. The great challenge of the modern situation, in which Jews and non-Jews inhabit a common political and cultural world, is to marry loyalty to Jewish particularism to universalistic values. If Jews had not engaged in this difficult project, Judaism now would be nothing more than a quaint fundamentalist sect, like the Amish, its face set determinedly against the modern world and all of its works. It is time to remind ourselves, too, of the Bundists and Labour Zionists who fought for Jewish honour in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and enacted vengeance for the murder of our brothers and sisters. On May Day in 1943, they celebrated the first week of their resistance in the ghetto, singing the *Internationale*. They could have been singing the proletarian anthem with socialist friends on the Aryan side, but chose not to. They could have been smuggled out of the ghetto, but chose to die inside. In Jewish history, not only the Zealots of Masada have known how to die for our people.

Contra Musar

The Yeshiva. By CHAIM GRADE
Translated by Curt Leviant. Indianapolis; New York. The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1977. 394 pp. \$12.50.

Reviewed by MOSHE MOSKOWITZ

FROM ITS INCEPTION, the theology of Rabbinic Judaism has been that of a beleaguered community whose classic institutions were under constant attack. In reshaping and restating the principles of a normative Judaism at the critical moment when the political and judicial responsibility for the community first passed into their hands, the Rabbis' main effort was directed at keeping the Torah supreme. They reasoned that adherence to the highest discernible meaning of the Torah would keep the community together and, at the same time, promote the higher life of the Jewish people. Nevertheless, the early teachers of the Torah were superlatively practical and what they enjoined was not blind and automatic obedience, but, rather, a reasonable adherence to the Law in keeping with Hillel's principle of "practical benevolence."

It is this traditional principle, in conflict with the self-damning dogma of ascetic Musarism, which forms the background of Chaim Grade's sweeping and masterful Yiddish novel, *Tsemakh Atlas*, the first volume of which is now available in an English translation by Curt Leviant under the title, *The Yeshiva*.

Grade's novel begins at that point in Jewish history when the Musar movement had begun to fail as a

constructive religious reaction to the Haskalah. Founded by Rabbi Israel Salanter in 1840, it sought to counter the centrifugal effects of the Haskalah by stressing Torah study, good deeds, compassion, and critical self-examination, all within the fraternal bounds of a cohesive Jewish community. Some of Salanter's later disciples, however, contributed to the eventual inefficacy of the movement by accenting a harsh and masochistic asceticism, thus forgetting the practical view of the founders of normative Rabbinic Judaism who, many centuries earlier, had recognized both human weakness and potentiality and had decreed that "no ordinance is to be laid on the people unless the majority of the people are able to bear it."

Placing the action of his novel in the environs of Vilna, Poland, after the First World War, Grade spins an alternately moody and volcanic tale which is not only breathtaking in its polychromatic effect, but which also gives visible evidence of the profound and compassionate understanding of man's vulnerability to his own instincts.

It is the milieu of the Musarist yeshiva—its students, supporters, enemies, and its particular flavor—which is the focal point of the novel. For those to whom the word *yeshiva* conjures up arcadian visions of pale and sensitive young Jews forever preoccupied with matters of Torah and other heavenly thoughts, Grade's portrayal comes as a rude shock. The paleness is there, but the sensitivity is frequently replaced by lust, greed, and a vicious concern for self-glorification. These yeshiva students often evince a pettiness which is at the furthest remove

from the intent and spirit of the Torah. For instance, there is little Melechke, who whimpers his way through the Talmud, hoping to evoke a complimentary pinch of his cheek or a fatherly pat on the head. Yosef Varshaver is as "clever and beautiful as an angel," but is disrespectful to the head of the yeshiva and to his wife, and his blackmail threats are more befitting an unlearned gangster than a senior yeshiva student. There is also Hertzke Barbitoler, the ruffian son of the blustery and paranoid Vova Barbitoler, who consents to study at the yeshiva in order to escape his father, but who gladly leaves his *talis* and *tefillin* behind when his garish mother takes him off to Argentina. Then there is Chaikl Vilner, based on the young Grade himself, torn between desire and guilt, who possesses a considerable measure of tactless *huzpah*, and yet is also a serious and courageous student. Chaikl eventually comes under the influence of the protagonist, Tsemakh Atlas, but he also goes off to study with the saintly Reb Avraham-Shaye, whose tolerance and wisdom are in the best tradition of the ancient rabbis, and whose pervasive and passive benevolence approaches that of a modern psychoanalyst.

The novel bristles with characterizations, and there are fascinating portraits of some of the parents of the yeshiva students as well. These portraits and vignettes are never flat, or black and white. Each of the characters, negative though he may be, seems caught up in the turmoil of his feelings, and in the feelings of those about him. The ultimate effect is that of an East European Jewry rocking on its emotional heels, clawing its way to some inscrutable goal.

Hertzke's father, Vova Barbitoler, for instance, is a slobbering buffoon, both bemoaning and cursing the wife who has left him. His

concern for the son whom he constantly beats, and his drunken preoccupation with the *tsitsit* of the yeshiva students, may strike the reader as offensive and disgusting, but, in the end, he appears as a lonely and broken figure. Then there is Volodya Stupel, the boisterous, rich merchant to whom cruelty is a game, but who evinces a genuine concern for his sister, the wife of the protagonist. Another fine portrait is that of Chaikl's father, Reb Shlomo-Motte. An elderly *maskil* and a strong believer in practicability, he would rather have his son learn a useful trade and help his mother, than while away precious time in studying Musar.

In addition, Grade's profiles of pious and love-hungry Jewish women, as well as of scheming adolescent girls bent on snaring a husband, are drawn with skill and sympathy. The most memorable feminine portrait is that of Slava, the protagonist's wife. Bright, good-looking, and quite chic, she flirts with a married schoolteacher both before and after her disastrous marriage with Tsemakh. Nevertheless, she continues to be drawn to Tsemakh's seriousness of purpose and is clearly attracted to him despite, or even because of, his resolute rejection of her. It is the shapely Slava who gives cutting expression to a fundamental Grade observation on human character, with her terse statement that "Ever since time began people have been both beasts and angels."

All of these characters, however, appear as peripheral rapids churning about the maelstrom that is the central character, Tsemakh Atlas. There has seldom been a more powerful characterization in all of Yiddish literature than that of the brooding and guilt-ridden Tsemakh, who, to shift the figure of speech, hovers over the pages of the novel like some gigantic Promethean vulture ready to swoop

down and devour its own liver.

After a time as a young Torah student in the town of Lomzhe, Tsemakh leaves his home and travels to the Musarist yeshiva in Navarodeck, Lithuania, to perfect his character. Quickly acquiring the reputation of one who would sacrifice his life for the Torah, he travels thereafter throughout the towns of White Russia and the Ukraine, establishing Musarist yeshivas and, when necessary, smuggling young boys out of Russia. At the same time, he is fierce and sulking, assailed by doubts concerning the existence of God and by his own forbidden desires. Because his own life seems to him to be a lie, he begins to see untruth everywhere, and eventually finds solace only in the Musarist principles of hermitic self-denial, Musar study, and ecstatic prayer.

Arriving in the town of Amdur to establish a new Musarist yeshiva, Tsemakh agrees to a match with the plain-looking but kind Dvorele Namiot. Having ascertained, however, that the bride's father may renege on the dowry and that the prospective bride is rather sickly, Tsemakh slips out of town feeling somewhat guilty, but thinking about another girl whom he had seen at the engagement party: "Aboard the train heading back for Lomzhe, Tsemakh thought more of the bright-eyed, black-haired beauty than of his fiancée."

It is with Tsemakh's relationships with two other women, Slava Stupel and Ronya Weinstock, and the effect of these relationships on Tsemakh's character and behavior, that the main plot of *The Yeshiva* is concerned.

At first glance, Slava would seem to be temptingly available, but her offhand manner and illicit flirtations stamp her as obviously dangerous to the likes of a Tsemakh Atlas. Worldly and seductive, she would make a most

unlikely *rebbetsin* for any Musarist, let alone for a sulking self-flagellator. Tsemakh knows this, yet he marries her and then spends the rest of his life alternately regretting the marriage and longing for the marriage bed.

Irritating and antagonizing his wife's family, Tsemakh leaves to establish a small Musarist yeshiva elsewhere. In the little village of Valkenik he meets Ronya, who is described as "thin and wispy, with a firm body. . . ." Pleasant and amiable, Ronya pines away because of the antics of her husband, a gallivanting *sheliaḥ*. The stifled exchanges between the forbidden woman and the handsome introvert, Tsemakh Atlas, late at night in the dark corridors of her home, are among the high points of the novel.

Yet how can a Musarist who is a disciple of Reb Yosef Yoizel—he of the two holes in the forest cabin (one for dairy and one for meat)—and who broke his betrothal to the good and kind Dvorele Namiot and married Slava Stupel, allow himself to yearn for still another married woman? In order to punish himself for these sinful thoughts Tsemakh leaves Ronya's home, where he is a boarder, and retreats to the Musar attic, where he ponders his failure both as a Musarist and as a human being.

Although Tsemakh's self-punishing behavior often seems exaggerated in the light of modern morality, in Grade's skillful delineation he emerges as an impressive and tragic figure. This is so because his nature, though it appears within the Jewish context of a religiously sanctioned socialized masochism, is, nevertheless, universal. Tsemakh is not self-destructive merely because he is an adherent of the Musarist philosophy. On the contrary, the Musarist yeshiva offers him the convenient framework within which he can inflict the needed punishment. Psy-

chologists assure us that there are many people like Polycrates, the ancient tyrant who threw his valuables into the sea in order to avert a deserved disaster. As long as external impediments such as poverty, physical disease, or an unhappy marriage persist, they are able to conduct orderly and limited lives; it is the smooth and direct route to happiness which maddens. Conversely, others remain inhibited as long as external circumstances are fortuitous, yet seem to acquire sudden power and freedom when faced with imminent disaster.

Tsemakh's disposition contains both of these elements. When faced with the prospect of moderate comfort, as in his betrothal to Dvorele Namiot, he flees into the arms of the dubious and flighty Slava. When finally presented with the opportunity of becoming a settled, wealthy, and possibly philanthropic merchant through his marriage with Slava, he destroys that relationship and becomes involved with Ronya, with whom he will not permit himself even a modicum of pleasure. Thus, his life becomes a long series of punishments and failures which, to his mind, are richly deserved and which provide him with a certain measure of perverse enjoyment: "Though he had found no answer during his solitude, he spent every free hour there and took pleasure in tormenting himself."

Yet this is the same Tsemakh who braves battles with those physically stronger than he, and who, during the post-Revolutionary persecutions, carries young yeshiva students on his back across the borders in order to establish new centers for Musar study. This latter feat earns him praise in Biblical terms, for it is said of him that " 'As an eagle stirreth up her nest and hovereth over her young . . . ' so does the Lomzher watch over his pupils."

Why this overriding inclination for self-negation and humiliation? Perhaps it is precisely because he feels so deeply the animal part of his nature. It is certainly no accident that most of the characters in this novel are described in animal terms. Thus, Vova Barbitoler looks like a man "who had crawled out of a forest cave," or else he is described as a "wild beast sunning his face." Volodya Stupel, Tsemakh's brother-in-law, is compared to "a bear with an upraised paw," and Slava herself is pictured as a cat: "She clambered over to a deep chair, folded her legs beneath her again, and stroked her knees with both hands." In addition, there are numerous descriptions stressing the dark, animal-aspects of Tsemakh's nature. Perhaps a few examples will suffice:

"He had the aquiline nose of a hawk, and his coal-black eyes radiated sorrow and a touch of anger."

"Tsemakh would stalk back and forth alongside the other students in the beth-medresh like a powerful beast that paces in a cage."

"He [Tsemakh] moved his long legs under the table like a stallion banging his hoofs on the ground."

Tsemakh despises himself for these animal features. "Studying Talmud is not enough," he tells the young Chaikl. "One must study Musar and be constantly on guard to prevent the Vova Barbitoler within us from developing and thriving." The buried lust hidden within himself, Tsemakh feels, must be extirpated by resorting to a religious masochism.

There are two aspects of these "buried lusts" that bear remarking upon. One is that they cannot possibly refer only to Tsemakh's feelings for the bizarre and inaccessible Slava, for these lie on the surface, as do his hesitant gropings for Ronya. Instead, it is quite likely that Tsemakh is actually punishing

himself for those infantile lusts and desires which are "buried" in the unconscious and which have surfaced again with merely a change in characters: it is no longer the forbidden mother who is desired, but a Slava or a Ronya.

Secondly, it is not incest that the rabbis regard as the ultimate sin, but, rather, the wish to do away with God. The son not only wishes to possess the mother but also to replace the father. Throughout the novel, Tsemakh is tortured by doubt: "Do you even really believe in a Creator who gave the Torah?" At times he hears a "demon" snickering in his ear: "You have no faith! You're fooling everyone! You're an atheist!" On the other hand, Tsemakh reveals an ambivalence toward God as an idealized father: "He believed in the perfect man, and he himself wished to become a heavenly man." Thus, Tsemakh punishes himself not only for his fantasies of forbidden women, but also because of his ambivalent feelings toward God the father. In so doing, he indulges in even more sinful self-aggrandizement: to Grade's brilliant imagery of Tsemakh as a bird of prey must be added another image—that of Tsemakh as a sinister avenging angel who steals God's wrath and turns it against himself.

These latter remarks, which may seem to be a kind of psychoanalytical *divertissement*, are perfectly fitting in view of the therapeutic aspects of another wonderful Grade characterization—that of Reb Avraham-Shaye, referred to in the novel as Mahaze Avraham. This imposing but radiant figure, who is based on one of the author's early teachers, Rabbi Abraham Isaiah Karelitz, also known as Hazon Ish, counters the fierce gloom which emanates from Tsemakh Atlas. He calms the emotional storms raging about Tsemakh and soothes the self-inflicted wounds of the *Musar-*

nikes with patient listening, a deferential smile, and gentle aphorisms which point the way to right conduct.

"Screaming and studying Musar out loud to drive away the *yetser ha-ra* is as effective as sweeping shadows away with a broom."

"Every man is a village of good and bad Jews, and of many bad and good inclinations. So first we have to weigh when it is proper to start a quarrel with oneself and when not."

"The proper path for perfecting one's character isn't to tear the innate desires out of oneself, but to make them better and more beautiful."

Mahaze Avraham never proposes a general moral laxity, nor does he advocate a secular humanism with little or no connection to the basic customs and practices of traditional Judaism. On the contrary, though he espouses social and artistic sublimation, he does so within the context of the foundation of Rabbinic Judaism: "The strength that can lift man up is inherent in the acquisition of wisdom. . . . Hence studying Torah is the only sure way. . . ."

* * *

It should be noted that behind the technical device of animal imagery, Grade's art remains essentially humanistic and imbued with a sense of high seriousness. Through its use of multiple plots and characters *The Yeshiva* conveys an atmosphere teeming with the thickness of Jewish life. Furthermore, as the notable critic, George Steiner, once indicated, "great art touches on experience philosophically and religiously." In its total effect, Grade's *The Yeshiva* not only communicates a brilliant illusion of life and reality within the Jewish context and at a particular point in Jewish history, but it also imparts Grade's essential

message: it inveighs against the excessive achievement of a self-defeating heroism, and restates the traditional Jewish belief in an inward principle of tolerant order.

It is for this reason that Leviant's translation looms as significant in the field of Jewish literature. For those who cannot manage the original Yiddish, Grade's greatest work is now available in an English which is not only readable, but which also manages to capture the bustling friction of the novel, as well as some of its more sombre and delicate moments. In addition, the translator has provided the reader with a preface which serves as a fine introduction to the works of Grade as a whole.

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The End of the Diaspora?

Letters to an American Jewish Friend: A Zionist's Polemic. By HILLEL HALKIN. Philadelphia, Pa. The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1977. 246 pp. \$7.50.

Reviewed by JACOB AGUS

WE BEGIN OUR REVIEW of this extremely provocative book by asking, "Why the sub-title: A Zionist's Polemic?" It suggests that the thesis of this work, negation of the Diaspora, is the normal, or normative position of a Zionist. But, in the American context, that is hardly the case. So called "Philanthropic Zionism" is by far more representative of the philosophy of American Zionism, particularly after the passage of the U.N. resolution equating Zionism with *racism*. The sudden eruption of hundreds of buttons bearing the legend, *I Am A*

Zionist, did not imply any determination to cut one's roots in America and move to Israel.

Furthermore, the publication and sponsorship of this pronouncement of doom on American Judaism, by the Jewish Publication Society, an agency not famed for welcoming "controversial" views, is liable to give the impression that the "Jewish establishment" endorses the thesis that Judaism in the Diaspora is rapidly sliding down toward the abyss.

Many Jewish groups are today promoting *aliyah*, but without downgrading Jewish life in the Diaspora. It is argued, and plausibly so, that the great historic *mizvah* of this hour is to help mold the character of the emergent society in Israel. Precisely because the quality of life in Israel will be a test of the worth and meaning of our heritage as Jews, every one of us is challenged to involve himself personally in this enterprise—especially if his skills and expertise are sorely needed in the Jewish state, while they are abundant in the Diaspora. We may regard the Jewish communities of the world as a rainbow, all the more beautiful because of its many and diverse colors. Individual Jewish communities can be the bearers of Divine light in all parts of the world, with Israel exerting a special appeal, by virtue of its immense potentialities for good. Its very precariousness and insecurity challenge all the more those who are concerned with the future of the Jewish people.

In any case, the cause of *aliyah* can be promoted without denigrating the life of Diaspora Jewry—its religious institutions, its schools, its philanthropies, its claim on the future.

To be sure, the negator of the Diaspora can enjoy the zest which derives from absolute consistency. He can drive home his points with

the joy of total abandon. He need not pull back his punches, or carefully measure the relative weight of diverse facts and figures, condemnations and anticipations. He narrows his focus, looks neither to the right nor to the left, drives straight ahead. *Kol hakavod*, all glory to The Simplifier!

But, before we yield to the fascination of simplification and join the chorus, hailing the Great Simplifiers in our midst, let us recall that our enemies in history, of the Right and the Left, were Great Simplifiers. Socialists, Nationalists, even Liberals, if they were absolutist, rigidly consistent, true believers of their respective ideologies, resented our presence. If there is one situation which resists the cutting edge of "either-or," it is that of the Jewish people. Yet, the argument of this impassioned call to American Jewry issues a demand for an existential decision—"to be or not to be," *aliyah* or else, "either-or."

* * *

This book is well-written and passionately argued. The author's deep feeling is artfully articulated. He is intelligent, sensitive and talented as a writer and, when he forgets to belabor his thesis with single-minded zeal, he writes interestingly. At times he inserts four-letter expletives to prove, I suppose, that he is "with it," *au courant* with the new generation. Educated in an American Orthodox day-school and secular colleges, he is well-informed; as a precocious adolescent, he went through a period of intense religiosity, but, at the age of 16, he turned with a vengeance. He is incapable of visualizing a cogent and viable alternative to Orthodoxy, but for him it belongs to a world that is dead. Like that proverbial Jewish Robinson Crusoe, he must

have a *shul* "into which he would not enter for a million dollars." If he could indulge a "leap of faith," it would be to an Orthodox *shtetl*, but he has no intention of doing so.

Let us now proceed to outline his argument.

He begins by describing some of the hardships of Israeli life. There is the duty to interrupt one's routine and to serve some weeks in the Reserves; there is the *hamsin* and the inflation; there is pervasive disgust with the politicians who run the country. The political leaders, we are told, enjoy "the moral authority of horse-thieves." There is no tone of civility in public life, no feeling of culture in the streets. "I tell you this country is full of shit" (p. 9). The emergence of an Israeli folk-culture is still in the future; for the present, Hebrew culture is a "hodge podge" (p. 12). Nevertheless, and in spite of it all, the land itself exerts an indubitable attraction. And, then, there is the nearly physical impact of "the community of faith" that is the Israeli people. The common beliefs of the Israeli are not theological but sociological—namely, "Jewish life in the Diaspora is doomed; therefore, it is natural for a Jew who is committed to his Jewishness to desire to live only in Israel" (p. 24). This massive conviction puts every visiting Jew "on trial"—why not come home? What if life in Israel is unpleasant? Should a person hesitate to enter a lifeboat because it is unpleasant?

The rest of the book is an expansion of this argument. Halkin regrets the thesis of Aḥad Ha'am "that a Jewish state will make Jewish life viable in the Diaspora." This opinion is held only by a minority, and it is inconsistent with the beliefs of "classical Zionism" (p. 37). Furthermore, the author dares to depart from the official Zionist line and to argue that the state of Israel is likely to be a source of

trouble and unease for American Jews (p. 64). The towering burden of Israel's financial and military needs will crush the life out of American Jewish institutions of learning, while the tug-of-war between America's and Israel's interests will put the Jews of America in an intolerable dilemma. If the absence of a Jewish state in the past made Diaspora Jewry vulnerable and anxiety-ridden, the availability of a Jewish state in the present will render it even more so, intensifying Jewish "abnormality."

Let us be honest about it: if the issue of dual loyalty is such a potential nightmare, this is not because it is the malicious invention of rabble rousers or anti-Semites but because it reflects the real ambiguity of being simultaneously a Jew and a citizen of a country on which a Jewish state's future depends (p. 68).

One way or another, if the issue of Israel has been a remarkably unifying force in American Jewish life until now, it is likely to become an equally polarizing one in the future (p. 69).

He maintains that Israel cannot but view American Jewry as "a depleteable resource"—expendable, if you will. "A young state is taking over the burden of Jewish history from an old Diaspora, and it is characteristic of the young to be demanding and ungrateful toward their elders, whose only hope they yet are" (p. 72).

The seeming renaissance of American Jewry is, in the author's opinion, a cruel illusion. All of modern Judaism, with its emphasis on the inner core of Jewish faith and ethics, is a farce. "Ethical idealism and the philosophical mind as Jewish traditions indeed, as if these were the distinguishing marks of historic Jewish existence rather than the very symptoms of its degradation in modern times!" (p. 77).

The recent improvement in

Jewish-Christian relations is denounced as a dangerous trap. "... the less Jews had to do with the goyim ... the better off they were" (p. 86). Judaism is not really concerned with "social justice" in the world (p. 88). "Show me a verse in the Pentateuch enjoining the Israelites to treat their pagan neighbor with consideration and I will show you five calling for his ostracization and extermination" (p. 191). As to the "ethical genius" of Jewry, it is nothing but "claptrap" (p. 89).

For ethics the life of an Israelite and the life of an Amalekite are equal; for the Bible and historic Judaism they are not. Ethics makes the same demands on everyone; cultures and histories do not. And thus, if either are what make a Jew like everyone else, they cannot also be what makes him a Jew (p. 97).

Referring to the "intellectual explosion" of modern Jewry, he asserts that, from a "Jewish" viewpoint, it was a "total loss" (p. 102). Essentially, he asserts, Judaism is "anti-intellectual." His dream is of soldiers in the Maccabean armies, shivering in their tents. "Of such gross stuff is sacred history made" (p. 113).

Similarly, his view of religion is narrow and concrete—so many myths and beliefs, so many rituals and customs. He disdains Reform and Conservative Judaism as "an inspired seven-layer substitute" for the real thing—which he rejects. He quotes Heine's famous quip—"*Wie es christelt sich, so jüdet es sich*," half a dozen times as if it epitomized the height of wisdom. But, if the inner soul of religion is a spectral illusion, the holiness of the soil is "inalienable" (p. 145). Our task is "the creation in Israel of an authentically secular Jewish culture that will at the same time be an organic continuation of our religious past ... Not *Judaism* but *Jewishness*; *Sh'lilat Hagolah*, in regard to the

Diaspora's future, but not in regard to its past" (p. 159). Frankly, Halkin asserts, our goal should be, "to be like all the nations." He writes:

My dear friend, I am not a religious Jew, and I do not consider these words a reproach. Would we were like the Gentiles already . . . If we had as much true culture in this country as the Albanians or Finns, the Guatemalans or the Greeks, I would gladly say *dayenu* too (p. 198).

As to a higher purpose of Jewish life, the author declares, "I don't know why I should be a Jew" (p. 240). But, he does not doubt that Jews face a choice—"either-or"—and those who commit themselves to secular Jewishness and still aim to survive must opt to remove themselves to Israel, where, alone, Jewish history will be made.

* * *

The challenge of the author is so all-embracing that it would take a book of at least equal size to contain a reasoned response to every point that he raises. The voice of the Diaspora is heard in this work only in occasional quotations and snatches, yet I believe that it is essential that a full American answer be given. The masochism of American Jewry, dating from the days of mass-immigration, must not be carried to the point where its own agencies of enlightenment preach the gospel of its dissolution and its decay. Such prophecies tend toward self-fulfillment, in part, if not in whole. Here is a book that mows down two centuries of modern Jewish thought with one arrogant sweep and reduces the fullness of a great spiritual tradition to the bits and pieces of ritual and mythology. Yet it is presented as the "polemic of a Zionist," at a time when, for political reasons, Zionism has been declared to be sacrosanct, uplifted beyond the range of criti-

cism and equated with Judaism itself. Does Judaism, itself, then, demand to be turned into "Jewishness?" Are American Jewry, in particular, and Diaspora Jewry, in general, doomed to disappear? Is Israel alone the heir of Jewish history?

The answer to these questions requires that we analyze the meaning of Judaism, the vision of the Jewish people and the strategy of creative survival.

The meaning of Judaism may seem to be irrelevant to our discussion. Yet, Halkin is perceptive enough to recognize that the Negation of the Diaspora, as distinct from a call for *aliyah*, must be based upon a thorough "transvaluation" of all values, substituting secular Jewishness for sacred Judaism. If this transformation is not accepted as a desirable goal, then the import of Judaism in the Diaspora cannot be scorned as worthless. An individual Jew, loyal to Judaism in any one of its three forms, can find fulfillment in America, or in any free country. But if secular Jewishness is, indeed, the only fitting form of Judaism in the future, then it is easy to see that the Diaspora does not provide a suitable context for any kind of secular Jewish culture. Hence, the major premise of the author's thesis relates to the concept of Judaism itself.

At this point, we take note of the *fallacy of reductionism* in the thesis of Negation of the Diaspora. A person may be identified by that which is peculiar to him—say, his name, his appearance, or the length and shape of his nose. But he is, at the same time, the possessor of a soul, a representative of the human species, and it is his inner being that determines his personality. What is peculiar to him may be relatively unimportant, in his own scale of values, though to the eyes of flesh a physical feature may be his most conspicuous trait. Cyrano de

Bergerac's nose was not his true self. Gogol's tale about the nose that set out to take its owner's place at society functions is a case in point—all too often, it is our peculiar appearance, rather than our true personality, that, for good or ill, fixes our place in the social scheme of things.

Now, Judaism is a great and sacred tradition, with an inner life of ideas, commitments and sentiments, and an outer range of rites and symbols. A living faith, with a historical consciousness of 4000 years, cannot but possess a multitude of distinctive elements which impress the outsider. But, in its own subjective life, it is the noblest achievements of its prophets, sages and artists that constitute the high-points of its heritage. Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, written in Arabic and translated in English, is infinitely more important as a stronghold of Judaism than all the elements of folk-culture which the author romanticizes, from the *chalent*, a Sabbath-dish, to the dance of the *hora*. It is because Halkin stands Judaism on its head, as it were, that he longs for the folk-culture of Albanians, Guatemalans, or Finns.

The greatness of the Bible lies not in the elements that it shares with the cultures of the ancient world—such as, the *herem* on Amalekites and Canaanites, but in the way that it frequently transcended the limitations of its time and foreshadowed the humanistic and spiritual ideals of our time. It was a great leap of the inspired human mind that created the philosophy of life of ethical monotheism. The Greeks who first came into contact with Judaism, from Theophrastus to Klearchos, recognized it as a great philosophy. As Prof. Harry Wolfson was wont to point out, the only religious culture that thoroughly modified Hellenic philosophy was Judaism. Religious philosophy began with

Philo and continued with only minor modifications to Spinoza. Indeed, we are taught in the Ethics of the Fathers "to learn from all people;" also, "without wisdom, there is no piety."

Now, this humanistic-spiritual dimension of religion and culture looms large in the theory and practice of Reform and Conservative Judaism. Even in the mentality of secular Jews in the Diaspora, this intellectual and idealistic realm of values has been cherished as the most precious heritage of mankind. In a century of ethnic narcissism and neo-primitive tribalism, the Jews in Western and Central Europe demonstrated the reality and worth of the homeland of the spirit, which is the heritage of all men of good will. Indeed, in ways which transcend our comprehension, the remarkable achievements of great Jews in the Diaspora reflect the momentum of Jewish history and of our sacred traditions. This is not to say that the same heritage will not be equally fertile in Israel. Who can tell the mystery of human creativity? However, we may be certain that scorn for the achievements of Diaspora Jewry will not be conducive to the emergence of a great culture in Israel. Students of anti-Semitism are not unfamiliar with the posture of those who love the dead Jews of history and scorn the living ones. It is not only the distant past, but, also, the living present of Diaspora Jewry that Israeli culture must embrace in love if that nascent culture is to be enriched by the creative impetus which is active in all branches of the Jewish people.

So, we come to the second point, the concept of the Jewish people. To the author, Israel is the young son of Diaspora Jewry, endowed with an extra measure of the Freudian Oedipus complex. The life of the parents has entered into the son, and the old folks are con-

demned to vegetate and die. How reminiscent of the rhetoric of Mussolini is this imagery about "young peoples." But societies are not biological organisms—especially not free, modern societies.

It is more rational, by far, for Israel to regard itself as part of a large family of brothers and sisters—perhaps, as the elder brother and guardian of the ancestral home. While the several members of the family live in different parts of the world, having married and settled in their respective homes, they have a special fondness for the home of their ancestors. They cherish the sacred traditions of the family, though they are not all agreed on its contents. An essential ingredient of that tradition is a remarkable spirit of mutual helpfulness. The entire family comes to the aid of those members who have troubles. They carry the burden cheerfully and are morally strengthened by it.

Today, Israel is the member of the family that is most in need of help. Its financial difficulties are obvious and it also requires new industries and skills in order to build up a viable society. It is surrounded by a hostile and potentially powerful Arab family of nations bent upon its destruction. Fortunately, sheer size and brute strength are not decisive in modern times. The spirit of a nation and its technical skills make possible the victory of the modern Davids. Ethical idealism and intellectual virtues are as much the foundation of Israel's existence as they are the pride of the Diaspora. So far, Israel's cries for help have been heeded by Jewish people all over the world. And not only by Jews. The Christian world in large measure has been morally supportive of Israel. Israel's friends in America base their position on the moral obligation of the western world to support Israel. There is no justification

for "a Zionist" to refer to Gentiles as *goyim* and to assert that the less one had to do with them, the better.

Thirdly, a strategy for survival. The author dooms the Diaspora to decay and oblivion and urges that we concentrate all of our efforts on the state of Israel. He concedes that while Israel is a miracle, even "a miracle does not come insured." But, in his view, we are now entering an era of "ingathering" which is likely to culminate in the state of Israel becoming the sole bearer of Jewish history.

"The hidden things belong to the Lord, our God." No one can foretell the shape of events in the distant future. We note from the experience of our own time that a few individuals can change the course of history. Without Hitler, there would not have been a Holocaust; without Churchill, Britain would not have sent half of her war production to defend the Eastern Mediterranean, and the young *yishuv* would have been overrun; without Roosevelt, the United States would not have entered the war in time to turn the tide against the Nazis. Who can predict the emergence of personalities so complex as Hitler, Churchill and Roosevelt?

We are morally obligated to work on the assumption that no Jewish community is expendable. To act otherwise is to assume the role which belongs to God alone and that is the Primary Sin. We must not presume to set priorities or to assign grades to the various communities on the basis of their relative "Jewishness." One century ago, Russian Jewry comprised 75% of the Jews of the world, American Jewry was small and relatively insignificant, while Palestine was a wasteland and a home of the aged. Only a prophet could have foreseen the present situation, and "ever since the destruction of the Temple prophecy was taken from

the wise and given to children and fools" (*Baba Batra* 12b).

When Jacob prepared to encounter Esau, he divided his family into two parts, saying, "If Esau will come to one camp and destroy it, the other camp will remain unharmed" (Genesis 32:9). This precaution of the Patriarch is still the best counsel for our people.

As Jews, we have learned to live in tension—awaiting the true Mes-

siah, even as we reject all pseudo-messiahs, those who shout, "Behold the Messiah is here and now." As Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai put it—"If you hold a sapling in your hand, when people cry out—'The Messiah is coming'—plant the sapling that is in your hand, then go out to see if he is coming."

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TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

I read patiently and attentively Ismar Schorsch's review of my book, *Tradition in an Age of Reform*, published in JUDAISM, vol. 26, no. 3. I sincerely wish that he had read my book as carefully and given its 480 pages as much time as I did to his three. Permit me, therefore, to make the following observations:

(1) Had the reviewer read the subtitle, *The Religious Philosophy of Samson Raphael Hirsch*, he would have realized that the fundamental aim of this work is to present Hirsch's religious philosophy in the context of the thought of his age and *no* biography—desirable and laudable it may be—was ever intended. This is also emphasized in the Preface (p. XIII). The two, out of fourteen, chapters devoted to Hirsch's life are designed to familiarize the reader with the man whose philosophy is expounded, just as the chapter depicting his era is intended for background and is not intended as a history of Germany or even of the German Jewish community of the nineteenth century.

(2) Had the reviewer read the Preface in which the aim and scope of the book is clearly delineated, he would not have found it "regrettable that Noah H. Rosenbloom's recent study of Hirsch, despite the seriousness of research and critical tone of the writings, brings us no closer to understanding the secret of Hirsch's enormous influence." A noble expectation, provided that this was the aim or one of the aims of the book. This is, however, explicitly excluded as stated in the Preface:

This study doesn't propose to analyze the underlying socio-psychological motives that may account for this fascination with Hirsch's personality and/or Weltanschauung. Its aim, rather, is to present an objective, critical exposition of his views on Judaism in the light of his sociocultural milieu and in the context of the Jewish and non-Jewish intellectual currents of his time. (p. xi)

(3) Had the reviewer read the Preface or even skimmed the pages of the book he could not have stated that it

deals *only* with Hirsch's early writings. *The Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel and Horeb*, while ignoring the voluminous writings of his later years.

In the Preface I state clearly that this study is based on *all of Hirsch's works*, from his beginning in Oldenburg until his last works in Frankfurt-am-Main. For methodological reasons, the author employs the classification of the early *Horeb*, comparing and analyzing the changes and variations of his writings during his later period in Frankfurt-am-Main, as stated:

Regrettably, unlike his Oldenburg period, where Hirsch collected his interpretations of the commandments into one book, *Horeb*, his subsequent interpretations are scattered throughout his voluminous writings. It was therefore imperative in this study to collect and collate the later interpretations and, when necessary, to indicate the changes and modifications in his rationale of given commandments. To facilitate this task it was found most appropriate to apply the classification Hirsch employed in his *Horeb*. The reader must therefore realize that while the part of the present book dealing with the interpretation of the commandments follows the classification of the *Horeb*, the similarity is only in the formal outline; in content it goes far beyond Hirsch's early handbook. The present analysis encompasses Hirsch's views on this subject as contained in all his works from Oldenburg through Frankfurt-am-Main.

To enable the reader to orient himself, abbreviated references to the early and later sources are given in parentheses in the text (pp. XIII-XIV).

Anyone just leafing through the pages could not miss the hundreds of such references to Hirsch's commentaries on the Bible (marked CG, CE, CL, CN, CD) to his *Gesammelte Schriften* (S) and other articles and essays.

In view of the aforementioned, it is patently clear the way Schorsch "read" the book that he reviewed, and entering into polemics with each erudite and profound criticism is merely an exercise in futility. Cognizant, however, of the fact that most readers read short reviews rather than long books and that their opinion is formed by that of the reviewer, who, as indicated in this case,

hardly read it, I would like to add a few brief remarks:

(1) The alleged prolixity and detailed treatment of *The Nineteen Letters* as if it were written "for a guild of scholars" is due to the author's contention that it represents a sketch of *Moriah*, a work intended to serve as a modern *Moreh Nevukhim*, but which never saw light. Such a reconstruction requires painstaking analysis and interpretation and, admittedly, may not be conducive to speedreading.

(2) The enigma of how Hirsch, whose higher education (described in part one) was limited, should "suddenly emerge in part two as an adept Hegelian" is, indeed, challenging, were it not for the fact that *ten* years had passed from his installation as Rabbi of Oldenburg until he wrote *The Nineteen Letters*, a decade which was the most fruitful and creative in his life. As for Hirsch being an "adept Hegelian," no such claim was ever made by the author, who maintains that because Hirsch's knowledge of Hegel was limited and fragmentary he dared to attempt what others, more erudite, feared to do. His failure to attain his goal—to reinterpret Judaism along Hegelian lines, his resort to eclecticism, pseudo-philosophy and symbolism, and reneging on the promise to publish his new *Moreh Moriah*—clearly indicates the author's view as to Hirsch's proficiency in Hegel.

(3) The reviewer's amazement that Hirsch, who was critical of Maimonides and Mendelssohn for their endeavor to interpret Judaism according to alien principles should himself try to do likewise with Hegel, was somehow pre-empted by the author (pp. 182–183). Moreover, the author even faces the problem: how "Hirsch, the exponent of traditional Judaism and a person of high religious and moral integrity [could] honestly and sincerely accept the views and methods of the out-

spokenly Christian Hegel?"

(4) According to the reviewer, "Rosenbloom fails to appreciate" the psychological impact of Bernays on Hirsch as a modern rabbi who assumed the title *Hakham* "to underscore the distance between himself and the widely detested old style *Rav*." Had Schorsch read the book he would have noticed that the author minimizes Bernays' actual tutorial and philosophic influence, but never the psychological one. "The influence may have been predominantly psychological rather than philosophic or theological. To the young Hirsch, Bernays may have represented the ideal spiritual leader suited for his time" (p. 56). As to Schorsch's "original" explanation concerning Bernays' title, *Hakham*, the author states:

Bernays assumed the title *Hakham* because it connoted wisdom and knowledge. He apparently wished to convey the idea that unlike the Orthodox rabbis who preceded him, he was a *Hakham*—a man of wisdom and culture. Thus he may have hoped to win back many members of the Jewish community who joined the Reform Temple because they found the Orthodox synagogue unattractive and the Orthodox rabbis uncultured (p. 417).

These observations are neither an apology nor a confutation, and were not motivated by any hypersensitivity. Anyone who dares to write about Hirsch is putting his head under the guillotine and inviting the vultures from the right and the left to a cannibalistic feast. Schorsch's critique, however, is neither ideological nor scholarly, but totally irresponsible and inexcusable. Were it published in another publication I might have ignored it. The respect for the high standard of your magazine and the intellectual caliber of your readers prompted me to write this letter.

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